

**SOCIAL WORK IN INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS IN THE
DURBAN METRO REGION**

BARBARA SIMPSON

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the
Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Faculty of Community
and Development Disciplines, University of Natal, Durban.

December 2001

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Working on this PhD has been a challenging and rewarding experience for me and I would like to thank all those who have supported and encouraged me during this period.

Firstly, I would like to thank the community leaders of Bhambayi and other informal settlements and the social workers who participated in this study. Your willingness to share your perceptions, thoughts and feelings with me is appreciated. Without you, this study would not have been possible. I hope I have done justice to your stories.

I would also like to thank the people of Bhambayi and the students who have worked with me over the past years in the University of Natal Community Project Bhambayi student unit. Together we have learned much and I know we will continue to learn as we make what contribution we can to help improve the lives of people who live in informal settlements.

I am especially grateful for the support, guidance and help I received from my supervisors. Prof. Mel Gray supervised the initial stages of the research and helped me to conceptualise and plan the study. Prof. Vishanthie Sewpaul supervised the latter stages of the research. Her pertinent questions at just the right time, her thoughtful guidance and her encouragement were of great help. Thank you both.

My colleagues in the Centre for Social Work, Graeham Tyndall, Reshma Sathiparsad and Vasintha Veeran, have been wonderfully supportive and I value their friendship. Thank you.

My husband, Wayne, and our sons, David, Bruce and Gary, my extended family and my friends have been a constant source of love and encouragement. I deeply appreciate your interest in my studies and your pride in me. I am richly blessed.

Finally, I wish to pay tribute to two special people who were closely involved in this research study and who are no longer with us. Nokuthula Sikhosana, my research assistant, died after a short illness in March 2000. Nokuthula overcame many obstacles in her quest to become a social worker and I admired her determination, her initiative and her ability to relate so comfortably to the many people she worked with. Stanley Blose, a community leader in Bhambayi, was killed in January 2000. Stanley was most supportive of the student unit in Bhambayi and of me personally. Stanley's vision for a better future was truly inspiring and I miss his comforting presence in Bhambayi. Rest in peace, dear friends.

Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF FINANCIAL AID

I wish to thank the University of Natal Community and Development Research Fund for its financial contribution towards the funding of this research study.

The financial assistance of the National Research Foundation: Social Sciences and Humanities towards this research is hereby acknowledged, with thanks. Opinions expressed in this thesis are those of the author and are not necessarily to be attributed to the NRF.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	1
BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY	1
PROBLEM FORMULATION	5
CONTEXT OF THE STUDY	7
PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH	9
RESEARCH QUESTIONS	9
CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY TO SOCIAL WORK	10
SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONISM: THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK GUIDING THE STUDY	13
The positivist paradigm	14
Social work and positivism	15
Growing scepticism regarding the positivist tradition	17
Towards an understanding of social constructionism	18
Social constructionism vs constructivism	20
Social work and social constructionism	21
The choice of social constructionism as a theoretical framework for this study	22
OVERVIEW OF CHAPTERS	25
CHAPTER TWO: FROM THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK TO RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	28
THE RESEARCH PROCESS: AN OVERVIEW	28
THE RESEARCH DESIGN	29
Exploratory descriptive research design	30
Case study research design	30
Action research design	31
RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS	31
Sampling strategy	32
Sample one: Social workers	32
Sample two: Bhambayi community leaders	34
Sample three: Workshop participants – social workers	

and residents of informal settlements	34
DATA COLLECTION METHODS	36
The researcher as the primary data gathering instrument	37
The importance of the natural setting	38
Unstructured interviews	38
Focus groups	40
Record of participants	44
Workshop: The search conference	44
DATA ANALYSIS	47
Recording and storage of data	48
From emerging themes to analysis of discourses	48
Negotiating the results	49
The inquiry product	50
ISSUES OF QUALITY CONTROL	50
Trustworthiness	50
Authenticity	52
ETHICAL ISSUES	53
Factors relating to the research process	53
Factors relating to the researcher-participant relationship	54
LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY	56
Factors relating to the sampling strategy	56
Possibility of respondent bias	56
Language issues	57
CONCLUSION	57
 CHAPTER THREE: SOCIAL WORK: HISTORICAL AND CONTEMPORARY PERSPECTIVES	 59
THE DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIAL WORK IN THE WESTERN WORLD	 60
Early beginnings	60
The influence of charities and settlements on the development of social work	63
The dual perspective of social work	65
Towards an integrated model for social work	69
THE SOUTH AFRICAN EXPERIENCE	76
The emergence of social work in South Africa	76
Social work under apartheid	78
Towards a new welfare system	81
Social work in post apartheid South Africa: Policy guidelines	83
Social work within a social development approach	86
The present situation: Social work under threat	89

CONCLUSION	94
CHAPTER FOUR: INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS: AN OVERVIEW	95
THE NATURE OF INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS IN SOUTH AFRICA	96
Origins and growth of informal settlements	96
Official responses to informal settlements	102
Towards a new approach to housing	104
South African housing policy	111
LIFE IN INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS	115
Socio-economic aspects: An "average" informal settlement	115
Housing in informal settlements	116
Services: Electricity, water, refuse removal and sanitation	118
Health	119
Education	120
Recreation	120
Conflict and violence as a feature of life in informal settlements	120
SOCIAL WORK IN INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS: A REVIEW OF SOUTH AFRICAN LITERATURE	124
Community work in informal settlements	125
A participatory partnership model for social work in informal settlements	127
Challenges and obstacles facing social workers in informal settlements	129
CONCLUSION	134
CHAPTER FIVE: BHAMBAYI: A CASE STUDY	135
INTRODUCING BHAMBAYI	135
Location	136
Historical background	136
Violence in Bhambayi and its impact on residents	141
Development and peace in Bhambayi	147
SOCIAL SERVICES IN BHAMBAYI	148
Health services	149
A theoretical framework for social work in a community	150
Identifying problems and establishing relationships: Social work students arrive in Bhambayi	151
Violence impacts on student social work	152
Starting over: Students return to Bhambayi	154
A new beginning: The day the sun shone at Bhambayi	156
Programmes offered	158
THE CHALLENGES OF SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE IN BHAMBAYI	168
Addressing poverty	168

Child sexual abuse : Growing concern	172
Working with community leaders: The saga of the television and video cassette recorder	176
CONCLUSION	181
CHAPTER SIX: VOICES FROM BHAMBAYI: COMMUNITY LEADERS SPEAK	182
PROFILE OF COMMUNITY LEADERS	182
A DESCRIPTION OF TYPES OF PROBLEMS EXPERIENCED BY PEOPLE IN BHAMBAYI	185
Poverty	185
Conflict and violence	189
The effects of family breakdown	192
Lack of resources	196
"It's not us – it's them!"	198
RESPONSES TO PROBLEMS IN THE COMMUNITY	199
Helpers in the community	200
SOCIAL WORK IN AN INFORMAL SETTLEMENT	202
Roles of the social workers	202
"Social workers are daughters of the government"	203
"Welfare" and "development"	204
The ideal social work service	206
CONCLUSION	209
CHAPTER SEVEN: THE VARIED NATURE OF SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE IN INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS	210
INTRODUCING THE SOCIAL WORKERS	212
Profile of social workers	212
Gender and race	217
Experience of social workers	218
Field of service and types of problems	219
Methods of social work	225
THREE SOCIAL WORKERS TELL THEIR STORIES	227
Reshma : "I'm brave and cheeky"	227
Buyi: "It's so hard....sometimes I just cry"	231
Pam: "Oh, I'm a general dogsbody"	235
Discourses of deficits and strengths	238
SOCIAL WORK WITHIN A SOCIAL DEVELOPMENTAL WELFARE FRAMEWORK	240

Addressing poverty	240
Addressing the needs of the vulnerable and those with special needs	251
CONCLUSION	259
 CHAPTER EIGHT: WORKING IN INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS: "ITS SO DIFFICULT"	 260
CONDITIONS IN INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS	261
Physical conditions in informal settlements	261
The experience of violence and danger	262
Cultural differences	265
Relationships between social workers and community leaders	271
Strengths in informal settlements	281
ORGANISATIONAL CONSTRAINTS	283
Physical working conditions	283
High caseloads	284
Supervision as a source of stress	287
Lack of funding for social work services	292
Lack of co-operation and poor co-ordination of services	294
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIAL WORKERS	295
Relevance of university training	296
Use of theory to guide practice	299
Opportunities for on-going development	303
POSITIVE EXPERIENCES OF WORKING IN INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS	304
CONCLUSION	307
 CHAPTER NINE: TOWARDS A SHARED UNDERSTANDING OF SOCIAL WORK: THE WAY FORWARD	 308
SUMMARY OF FINDINGS RELATED TO INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS	310
SUMMARY OF FINDINGS RELATED TO SOCIAL WORK	312
THE WAY FORWARD: SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	314
A theoretical framework for social work in informal settlements	314
Example One: Addressing poverty	315
Example Two: Caring for the vulnerable	319
Creating an enabling environment for social workers	322
Preparing social workers for empowering practice: Developing a reflective practitioner	327
Evaluating practice and knowledge building	329

CONCLUSION	330
REFERENCES	331

LIST OF TABLES

	Page
Table 1: Social work processes	4
Table 2: Summary of the research process	29
Table 3: Steps taken to ensure the trustworthiness of the data	51
Table 4: Principles of developmental social welfare	85
Table 5: A micro-macro perspective of social development	88
Table 6: Summary of Acts of Parliament that impacted on availability of land for African people	98
Table 7: Number of clients seen and interviews held in Bhambayi	159
Table 8: Age and gender profile of Bhambayi study participants	183
Table 9: Community involvement of study participants	184
Table 10: Differences between 'welfare' and 'development'	204
Table 11: Race and gender of social workers	217
Table 12: Number of years experience as a social worker	218
Table 13: Number of years experience in informal settlements	219
Table 14: Types of problems according to field of social work	221
Table 15: Examples of activities undertaken by social workers	226
Table 16: Causes of apathy and possible solutions	276

LIST OF FIGURES

	Page
Figure 1: Map of Durban Metro Region showing the location of informal settlements in which social workers worked	35
Figure 2: Map showing the location of Bhambayi	137
Figure 3: Map showing important landmarks in Bhambayi	138
Figure 4: The “deprivation trap” as experienced in Bhambayi	189

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

This qualitative study examines the nature of social work in informal settlements in the Durban Metro region. The overall purpose of the study was to develop an understanding of how social workers respond to the problems of people living in informal settlements and of how people living in informal settlements perceive social work. Through a process of dialogue, social workers and residents of informal settlements were invited to develop a shared understanding of social work in informal settlements and in so doing, develop guidelines for social work practice.

This opening chapter begins by providing the background to the study. The problem to be explored in the study and the context of the study are then introduced. The chapter then proceeds to outline the purpose of the study and the research questions. The value of the study and the manner in which it might contribute to social work knowledge and practice is discussed. The theoretical framework guiding the study and the research paradigm are advanced. The chapter ends with a summary of how the following chapters will be presented.

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

In 1992, the Department of Social Work at the University of Natal established a community based student unit in Bhambayi, an informal settlement approximately 25 kilometers north of the Durban city centre. At that time, the department was grappling with how to provide appropriate fieldwork experiences for students. Very few social work organisations offered opportunities for social work students to gain experience in all methods of social work and it was becoming increasingly difficult to find placements in

which students could gain a holistic experience of social work. In addition, very few organisations undertook work in informal settlements and those that did offered only community work services. The development of a community-based student unit at Bhambayi thus grew out of the perceived need for more appropriate training opportunities for student social workers. Fortuitously, at about the same time as this discussion was taking place, students visited Bhambayi as part of a community work course. During this visit a community leader commented on how neglected the area was and that a need for social work services existed. The Phoenix Settlement Trust, on whose land part of Bhambayi was, agreed to finance the establishment of the unit. The University of Natal Community project (UNCP), a registered welfare organisation established and run by staff, students and alumni of the Department of Social Work at the University of Natal agreed to provide administrative assistance.

During the first two years, students worked primarily with an existing women's group with a view to setting up a sewing co-operative. This was not successful due to many reasons, not least of which was on-going violence in the area. During 1993, students were caught in cross fire between two warring factions and this was a very traumatic experience for everyone concerned. Fearing an escalation of violence during the election year, the Department of Social Work withdrew the student unit at the end of 1993 with the promise that the situation would be reviewed at the end of 1994. When contact was again made with community leaders after the election, we were urged to return and the unit was re-established at the beginning of the 1995 academic year.

This study arose out of my experience as the co-ordinator and supervisor of this unit, a position that I have held since 1995. As a white, English speaking woman, who had limited practice experience in communities, I was not unaware of the challenges that working in an informal settlement would present. However, I naively believed that my experience as a social work

practitioner and educator provided me with an array of social work skills and a number of theoretical frameworks which would guide me and that my enthusiasm and goodwill would overcome any difficulties. I soon realised how unprepared I was to work in such an environment. The sheer magnitude of the poverty, the lack of resources with which to address those issues, the political volatility of the area and the physical dangers involved in being in such an area were all sources of uncertainty for me. The community's lack of understanding about what social work could offer and the absence of any "expert" guidance available, meant that much of what we did in Bhambayi, especially in those early days, was by "trial and error". My discussions with other social work practitioners who had begun work in informal settlements revealed that they, too, felt unprepared. Their training had been predominantly casework oriented and their previous experience had been with individuals rather than with communities. That our experience was not isolated was born out in a research study carried out by Ramphal and Moonilal (1993). Social workers in that study described themselves as feeling insecure and dissatisfied with their level of competence to handle the kinds of problems that were arising in the new South Africa.

Working in an informal settlement presented many challenges. Much of the existing social work literature suggested a linear approach to problem solving. Compton and Galaway (1999) described the stages of this process as engagement, assessment, intervention or action and evaluation. The process usually begins with establishing relationships and defining problems. Once problems are identified and understood, a plan of action is drawn up, implemented and evaluated. During this process, the social worker provides support and guidance and at different times may adopt the roles of enabler, advocate, mediator or teacher. Much the same process holds for work with individuals, groups and communities, although the terms used to refer to the stages may differ (Corey and Corey, 1992; Egan, 1994; Lombard, 1991). The

following table illustrates this.

Table 1: Social work processes

WORKING WITH INDIVIDUALS (Egan, 1994)	WORKING WITH GROUPS (Corey and Corey, 1992)	WORKING WITH COMMUNITIES (Lombard, 1991)
Present scenario: Help client can tell the story and identify problems Future scenario: Set goals Moving from the present to the future: Plan and implement action	Forming: Planning group around identified needs Initial stage: Establishing trust and setting goals Working stage: Working towards goals Ending stage: Review and evaluate	Situation analysis Identification of need Engaging the community Planning: Formulation of goals and objectives Implementation Evaluation

In community work, the importance of gaining entry to the community by meeting with both informal and formal community leaders and by completing a situational analysis and identifying needs and problems (Lombard, 1991) is stressed. Entry into an informal settlement immediately poses questions. For a start, who are the leaders and where there is conflict regarding leadership, with which leader does the social worker work. Bhambayi was and still is a politically divided area with members supportive of the African National Congress (ANC) and supporters of the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) living in clearly demarcated areas. In addition, the very location of the student unit's office in the only suitable structure (a disused clinic building) was in the middle of the ANC area. Immediately, (and unwittingly and unwillingly) we were aligned with the ANC and it was three years before we were allowed into the IFP section. Then there is the question of the need's assessment - where there are so many needs, where does one start? Whose definition of needs

takes precedence? During one community meeting in the early years at Bhambayi, people said they wanted a children's home. Given the many other needs for basic services and our own very limited capacity, as well as the general acceptance in society today that children are best cared for in their own homes, it was very unlikely that this request would be met! Our explanation that this was unrealistic was, however, criticised by some members of the community who accused us of not taking them seriously.

With experience, I came to understand community dynamics better and in retrospect, I was often able to see where mistakes had been made and how our practice could be improved. However, there were some instances in which I still have no idea of why what seemed to be perfectly sensible and simple plans of action did not work!

Working in Bhambayi has been the most frustrating, and yet the most exciting experience of my professional life. I have been deeply distressed by the cruelty of some people, especially in child sexual abuse cases. I have been saddened by the unnecessary deaths of people I had come to care about through violence and illnesses that appeared to be AIDS related. I have been moved and inspired by the resilience of some people and their commitment to making their community a better place. I have been humbled by their acceptance of me, an outsider, in their community. My own personal search for answers motivated me to undertake this study and this thesis reflects this journey of discovery.

PROBLEM FORMULATION

For the purposes of this study, informal settlements are defined as those "dense settlements comprising communities housed in self constructed shelters

under conditions of informal or traditional land tenure" (Hindson and McCarthy, 1994:1). Accurate figures regarding the numbers of people living in formal settlements are difficult to ascertain. Estimates are that five and a half million people in South Africa (Total population: Approximately 40 million) live in about one and a half a million self-constructed informal dwellings (SA Yearbook, 1999). Locally, a detailed mapping exercise of all informal settlements in the greater Durban region has been completed and figures suggest that approximately 750 000 people live in 565 informal settlements (Durban Durban Metro Housing, 2000). Given that in May 2000, the housing backlog in South Africa stood at three million (SA Yearbook 2000), it would appear that the problem of informal settlements will be with us for years to come.

While people living in informal settlements experience many of the same problems that any other person may experience, very particular problem issues are associated with informal settlements. These settlements are characterised by a lack of infra structural development and basic services such as water, electricity, sanitation, refuse removal and roads are lacking. This material deprivation is exacerbated by poor access to schools, health and recreational facilities. In addition, public violence and uncertainty about their future has been a feature of many informal settlements. Residents of informal settlements are thus vulnerable to all manner of social ills and their quality of life, as McKendrick and Senoamadi (1993: 213), rightly stated "must be a matter of deep concern to social workers". This, of course is not meant to imply that all people living in informal settlements experience pathology. It will become clear, as the thesis proceeds, that there are many people in informal settlements who establish for themselves a positive way of life and who serve their communities in an attempt to improve the quality of life for themselves and their neighbours.

The social welfare system in general, and social work, in particular has not

responded positively to the needs of those in informal settlements in the past and has tended not to serve those in greatest need (Gray, 1989; McKendrick, 1991). Services have been directed more to formal communities in the urban areas. Previous government policy that saw informal settlements as "temporary", together with fear and a lack of access to such areas in the past have contributed to this. In 1993, for example, a social work student could only locate six social workers in the Durban region who had actually worked in informal settlements (Bennett, 1993).

In an attempt to operationalise new welfare policy in South Africa, social work services have been extended to areas that were previously neglected. This has resulted in an expansion of services to informal settlements. The following section explains the policy context in which this expansion has taken place and provides the context for the study.

CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

The first democratic government was elected by the people of South Africa in 1994. This brought with it the promise of a better life for the many millions of people who had been oppressed and sentenced to lives of poverty by the previous government. The Reconstruction and Development Programme, known as the RDP (ANC, 1994), was adopted by the new Government of National Unity as a comprehensive socio-economic policy framework. Through an integrated and sustainable programme which was people driven, the RDP aimed to meet basic needs, provide peace and security for all, build the nation, link reconstruction and development and deepen democracy (Munslow and Fitzgerald, 1997). Based as it was on values of democracy, social justice, respect for persons and peace, and driven by principles of participation, inclusivity, representiveness and empowerment, the RDP was very attractive to

social work (Triegaardt, 1996) and many social workers saw themselves being key personnel in the implementation of the RDP. A conference of the Joint Universities Committee on Social Work held in Cape Town in 1995 had as its theme, "The RDP and Social Work" and many of the papers presented at this conference reflected social work's commitment to working within this framework.

While the RDP provided a vision for a future South Africa, it was doomed to failure. Insufficient attention had been paid to design and implementation of institutional arrangements for effective delivery of services in terms of the RDP (Munslow and Fitzgerald, 1997). A further major problem was the RDP's underestimation of the impact of globalization. World markets are concerned with short- term profit maximisation while sustainable development seeks longer- term goals of social equity and redistribution. Reconciling these diverse goals in a developing country such as South Africa seemed impossible. Within two years, the RDP was replaced with GEAR (Growth, Employment and Redistribution) as the dominant economic framework. GEAR adopts a "narrow fiscal approach with the emphasis on fiscal austerity (through rationalisation and curbing of state expenditure); lowering of interest rates; trade policy favouring export led growth; privatisation of state enterprises and labour market reforms" (Sewpaul, 2001:315).

Despite this, RDP principles live on in the White Paper for Social Welfare (1997). This White Paper provides the guidelines for current social welfare policy in South Africa and the context for present day social work practice. It defines social welfare as "an integrated system of social services, facilities, programmes and social security to promote social development, social justice and the social functioning of people" (White Paper for Social Welfare, 1997:15). Although there is a commitment to retain existing services, a strong commitment to a social development framework for welfare is evident.

While the White Paper (1997) proposes that social welfare services should be available to all South Africans, it makes special mention of those who should receive priority. These include women, children, the aged, the disabled, people with AIDS and offenders. The aim of the new social welfare policy is to "facilitate the provision of appropriate developmental social welfare services to all South Africans, especially those living in poverty, those who are vulnerable and those who have special needs" (White Paper for Social Welfare, 1997:5). There is a particular emphasis on poverty. Social work clearly cannot accept responsibility as the primary means of eradicating poverty. Political will is needed to set in place the economic and social policies that lead to this. Social workers, however, have a major role to play in the delivery of social welfare services and are called upon to function within this overall policy. The eradication of poverty must therefore feature prominently on the social work agenda.

PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH

The purpose of the research study was to:

1. Explore social workers' perceptions of the nature of social work in informal settlements.
2. Explore in detail social work practice and community perceptions regarding the provision of social work services in one particular informal settlement, Bhambayi.
3. Make suggestions for social work practice in informal settlements.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. PERCEPTIONS OF SOCIAL WORKERS: The main question regarding

the perceptions of social workers focussed on their understanding of what social work is and how it is practised in informal settlements. Specifically, the study sought answers to the following questions:

- What problems do social workers in informal settlements address and what methods are used to address these problems?
- What challenges are experienced in delivering services in such areas?
- What should be social work's response to the problems experienced by people in informal settlements?

2. COMMUNITY PERCEPTIONS:

The study was particularly interested in developing an understanding of how residents of informal settlements perceive their situation and how they believe that social work can be of assistance to them. Specifically, the study sought answers to the following questions:

- What problems should social workers be addressing in working with people in informal settlements?
- What experiences of social work services and other welfare services have people had?
- What do the terms "welfare" and 'social development" mean to community members/leaders in informal settlements and what should the role of social workers be in respect of these issues?
- How should social workers be approaching such problems, and specifically, what would be an ideal social work service in such areas?

CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY TO SOCIAL WORK

This study took place at a time when social work was facing many challenges.

The expectation that social work should be more developmentally oriented, together with dwindling resources has placed social work in an unenviable situation.

Increased clarity about the domain and expertise of social work is therefore essential in these times of uncertainty and can help to enhance the profession's pursuits (Rosenfeld, 1983). The designation of this domain should be based on data reflecting what social workers do and what they ought to do. This study therefore attempted to identify and describe what social workers working in informal settlements do and also asked community members what their expectations of social work were. The findings thus contribute to the development of a social work identity.

Historically, social work practitioners were researchers and the purpose of social work research was to produce knowledge that could be used to advance social work practice (Tyson, 1991). One of the values of this study has been its attempt to expand the knowledge base with a view to improve practice. A significant proportion of the population of South Africa live in informal settlements and an increased understanding of how to work in informal settlements will suggest practice principles and could lead to improved social work practice.

It has become increasingly apparent that it is not sufficient or appropriate to replicate western urban models of service delivery. This study addressed the on-going need for the development of locally specific social work theory that is grounded in context specific realities (Chikanda, 1988). Locally specific, or what is popularly known as Indigenous theory, must begin with understanding of the cultures which socialize people to view their world in a particular way (Osei-Hwedie, 1993). Greater understanding of how social workers work and how this is perceived by people in the community thus contributes to the

knowledge base of social work.

A considerable amount of research on informal settlements has been undertaken. The nature and extent of informal settlement in KwaZulu Natal has been well documented (Boaden and Taylor, 1992:147) and research studies have focussed on the following areas:

- Health and recreation (Grant and Meiklejohn, 1994)
- Violence (Hindson and Morris, 1994)
- Migration streams (Bekker and Louw, 1994; Cross, Bekker, and Clark (1992 and 1994)
- Population data and characteristics (Evans, 1994; Kiepiel, 1994,).

However, to date, there has been little specific focus on the social problems of people living in informal settlements and the response of social work to these problems. Several studies have been published in South African journals and these examined issues of violence in informal settlements (McKendrick and Senoamadi, 1993), child abuse (Simpson, 1997) and youth unemployment (Ransom, Poswa and van Rooyen, 1997). In addition, three South African studies that I know of regarding social work in informal settlements were completed during the process of this study. In a master's research study, Cloete (1998) examined capacity building in community leaders in informal settlements. In another master's study, Raniga (2000) evaluated community participation in a garden project in an informal settlement. van Schalkwyk (1997), in a PhD. study, developed a participatory partnership model for social work in informal settlements. Interviews with seven social workers and 21 community members in a specific informal settlement revealed the many problems experienced by poor people and the challenges facing social workers in dealing with these problems.

While similar in aim to van Schalkwyk's study, the present study focuses more

specifically on the nature of social work in informal settlements and seeks to gain a shared understanding of social work practice between social workers and residents of informal settlements. As far as I am aware, this study is a unique attempt to gain an understanding of social work from the perspective of the service consumer (or potential service consumer).

SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONISM: THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK GUIDING THE STUDY

The choice of social constructionism as the theoretical framework guiding this study needs to be understood in the context of knowledge building within social work. A belief in the scientific method or positivism as the best, and the only way of understanding the world has dominated western thinking for most of the past century. Positivism evolved in the 19th century as a reaction against the reliance on religious dogma and metaphysical speculation to provide the basis for understanding the world. A French philosopher, Augustus Comte, first coined the term "positivism" in the 1820s. He criticised the approaches used to study society at that time as being descriptive, philosophical and speculative and without any empirical stance (Mark, 1996; Sarantakos, 1993).

This section explores the influence of positivism on the methods of inquiry and the building of knowledge in social work. The section begins by examining positivism, its underlying assumptions and the way in which social work adopted this approach. It then goes on to explain why some researchers within social work criticise this view and suggest that a post- modern approach is more suited to social work and in keeping with its professed values. A detailed explanation of social constructionism then follows together with the rationale for the adoption of this as a theoretical framework for this particular study of social work in informal settlements.

The positivist paradigm

In its most common sense, a paradigm is a "basic set of beliefs that guides action." (Guba, 1990:17). In the area of research endeavours, paradigms arise out of answers to three inter-related sets of questions. One, **ontological questions** relate to assumptions regarding the nature of reality. In other words, what is the nature and form of reality and what can be known about it? Two, **epistemological questions** relate to assumptions about how we come to know knowledge and thus about the relationship between the inquirer and the subject being studied. Answers to this type of question are constrained by the answers already given to the ontological questions. Three, **methodological questions** relate to assumptions about how knowledge should be gained and how the inquirer should go about finding out this knowledge. Again, the answers to this question must be consistent with the answers already given to the previous two questions. Paradigms thus provide a starting point and determine the manner in which a research study proceeds and influences how we make sense of the data obtained.

The positivist paradigm is characterised by the following:

VIEW OF REALITY: The positivist world-view is rooted in a realist ontology. This world-view holds that an objective world exists independently of our existence or experience of it. In other words, "there is a single, tangible reality "out there" that can be fragmented into independent variables and processes" (Rodwell, 1998:14). In much the same way as laws and mechanisms operate in the natural world, so do they in the field of human relationships and problems. These laws and mechanisms can be identified and studied.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN OBSERVER AND OBSERVED: In positivist research, the researcher adopts an objectivist stance. The assumption is that the researcher is able to maintain distance from the observed, neither influencing what is being observed, nor being influenced by what is being

observed. Well-designed positivist research is value free and the researcher's biases do not influence the outcome of the study.

METHODS OF INQUIRY: The purpose of inquiry within a positivist paradigm is to develop a body of knowledge that can be generalised into "truth statements that are independent of both time and context" (Rodwell, 1998:14). From this world- view, a standard scientific methodology was adopted. In general, the research process involves creating a theory and deriving hypotheses which are then tested using objective methods (Guba, 1990;Mark, 1996). Experimental and quantitative methods are preferred. In this way, prediction and control of the issues being studied becomes possible.

Social work and positivism

From its earliest beginnings, social work adopted the "scientific method". One reason that social work adopted positivism as its guiding framework was the belief that this would help to establish the legitimacy of the profession (Karger, 1983). Porter Lee in 1915 indicated the importance of the scientific method for social work when he stated "no organised activity can claim professional standing until it rests upon scientific knowledge and has developed definite methods to reach its goals" (in Fraser, Taylor, Jackson and O'Jack, 1991). In 1917, Mary Richmond, widely considered to be one of the founders of the casework method in social work practice, declared that social casework was a science. She emphasised the collection of accurate data in order to make a diagnosis on which intervention could be based.

The extent to which this approach was adopted by social work is illustrated by the fact that the social work research group in the United States of America acknowledged logical positivism as its guiding research paradigm in 1949 (Tyson, 1991).

The commitment to scientific inquiry in social work was given a further impetus when outcome studies in the 1970s demonstrated that casework had not impacted positively on personal and social problems. This, according to some writers, indicated the need for a greater degree of research sophistication and methodological rigour (Thyer, 1989). Social work researchers were urged therefore to work in more scientific ways. In proposing the BESDAS (behavioural targets, empirically based knowledge, specific intervention methods, data guided practice, accountable outcomes and self correcting practice), Thomas (1977) argued that intervention based on empirical studies was likely to be more effective than intervention based on theory alone, ideology or personal preference. Sheldon (1978) berated social workers for neglecting the scientific method and called for greater scientific enquiry in social work. Hudson's (1978) now famous axiom, "If you cannot measure a client's problem it does not exist" and moreover "If you cannot measure a clients problem you cannot treat it" aptly illustrated social work's pre-occupation with positivism at this time. Thyer (1989:310) believed that social work responded well to these challenges with a number of studies in the 1980s using "well controlled group experimental designs, complex statistical analyses and validated measures of outcome".

Around this time too, considerable effort was being put into seeking an integrated and unified theory for social work practice. Based on the belief that there was something "constant, concrete and fixed about social work" (Howe, 1994:519), social work theorists began advocating for an overarching framework for social work practice and writings about the eco-systems perspective began to emerge in the social work literature (Greif and Lynch, 1983; Meyer, 1983).

Growing scepticism regarding the positivist tradition

This emphasis on positivist methodologies in social work research and the fierce defence of these methods of social work by their adherents has, however, not always sat comfortably with all social work practitioner-researchers (Thyer, 1989). In the first place, it has created ethical and value dilemmas. The notion, for example, that the researcher should be neutral is ill suited to the social work value of commitment to clients (Tyson, 1992). Social work's commitment to social justice has made it difficult to accept the notion of a value free and objective researcher that has no interest in helping the people we study (Mark, 1996).

Likewise, experimental methods that compare experimental and control groups have raised ethical concerns about withholding services to certain people. Efforts to establish a scientific base based on logical positivism have, it has been argued, eroded the caring element in social work and made clients into objects of study (Imre, in Sherman, 1991; Mark, 1996).

Some writers have also argued that the scientific approach has led to an increasing gap between research and practice (Weick, 1991). The rationalist problem solving approach demanded by the scientific method imposes a structure that does not correspond to complexities of the human condition and therefore does not provide an accurate view of reality. Reducing issues to a set of variables that can be measured or observed may help us to understand one particular aspect of the issue but does not help us to understand the "complex patterns and reciprocal influences that operate in human interactions" (Mark, 1996). There are therefore many compelling reasons to consider an alternative approach to social work research.

The positivist approach was described by Heineman Pieper (1985:3) as "outmoded" and by Tyson (1992:541) as "outdated, unwarranted and overly

restrictive" and, there have, since the 1980s been increasing calls for a new paradigm for social work research. Heineman Pieper (1985) suggested that social work give up its attempts at certainty as a goal for social work research. She suggested an alternative path for social work inquiry, an approach she termed the heuristic approach. Appropriate methodology, she suggested, should help to understand the difficult and complex problems of the human condition, rather than conform to a "misshapen image of science" (Heineman-Pieper, 1985:4).

Hartman (1990:15) suggested that more appropriate to social work whose boundaries are "wide and deep", was the notion of "many ways of knowing". Social work should, she said, welcome all types of research approaches that would all contribute in some way to us understanding our world better.

Towards an understanding of social constructionism

Social constructionism can be described as a post modern perspective which brings together three strands of critique - ideological critiques, literary-rhetorical critiques and social critiques of the positivist position (Gergen, 1998; 1999).

Ideologically, the positivist position sought to break away from the influence of religious and ideological values in the hope that decisions could be reached through objective, and rational means. Post modernists however, argue that any scientist is a moral agent in spite of the guise of neutrality. All social scientific accounts have notions of prescriptive implications and evaluative connotations. The very choice of questions and what is left unsaid implies value judgements.

The literary-rhetorical critique of positivism centres around whether words can accurately paint a picture of reality. The positivist position assumes that

language can be used to accurately reflect truth. Post modernists however argue that descriptions depend on words that could be used for any number of other descriptions. Language is thus not used to portray the real world but, in effect, determines how we perceive the world.

The social critique of positivism challenges the view that truth exists independently of any social processes. According to post modernists, knowledge is seen as discourse and is a by- product of social interaction. "Facts" are local and are embedded in customs, cultures, and myths. They are not universal but are the result of social processes.

While social constructionism acknowledges all these positions, the primary emphasis in social constructionism is, however, on the "social relational constitution of knowledge" (Gergen, 1994: xviii). Gergen (1985:266) defined social constructionist inquiry as "principally concerned with explicating the processes by which people come to describe, explain, or otherwise account for the world (including themselves) in which they live". Social constructionism is based thus on the following assumptions (Burr, 1995; Gergen, 1985; Witkin, 1991).

1. Our understanding of the world is not based primarily on our observation or experience of the world. Social constructionism adopts a critical stance towards taken for granted knowledge and challenges the view that knowledge is "based upon objective, unbiased observation of the world"(Burr, 1995:3). Rather, understanding may be more dependent on linguistic conventions, cultural assumptions and historical precedents.
2. "The language terms used to describe the world are the product of social processes which are historically and culturally situated" (Witkin, 1991:38). For example, concepts of marriage and children have

changed over time and different cultures have different ideas about these things. Cultural and historical factors thus influence our understanding of these concepts and knowledge is culturally and historically specific.

3. The degree to which a particular view or understanding of the world is held depends more on social processes such as communication and negotiation than on empirical validity. The view, for example, in apartheid South Africa, that marriages between people of different races was immoral was a result of social and political processes that imposed the view of one group of people on a whole country and was not based on any empirical facts.
4. "Knowledge and social action go together" (Burr, 1995:5) and these forms of negotiated understandings are crucial in social life. They are not just reflections of the way things are but constitute modes of social action (Witkin, 1991). For example, if we perceive people who are disabled as being unable to do anything for themselves we will not provide opportunities for them to live independent lives.

Social constructionism vs constructivism

The words, "constructionism" and "constructivism" are often used interchangeably in the literature and the boundaries between them appear to be somewhat blurred. Both emphasise the participatory role of humans in the construction of knowledge. They share a belief that reality is socially and psychologically constructed and that there is not a single, real world "out there" that can be measured. Both emphasise an interactional view of human behaviour and a connectedness between the individual and social environment (Rodwell, 1998).

Where they differ, is in how they conceptualize how reality is formed. Social constructionists emphasise the role of language, narrative, socio- historical and cultural processes while constructivists emphasise cognitive structures or schemas in the construction of reality (Franklin, 1995; Rodwell, 1998).

Social work and social constructionism

Many aspects of social constructionism are not new to social work and “fit comfortably with our ways of working” (Dean, 1993:144). Witkin (1991) suggested three reasons that make social constructionism attractive to social work. Firstly, social constructionism is compatible with person- in- environment and ecosystem perspective which has been widely adopted in social work as a framework for understanding how people are influenced by and, in turn, influence their environment. Payne (1999) argued that social constructionism offers a system of analysis that is potentially strong at both the interpersonal level and the more general or social level of explanation.

Secondly, it is consistent with the ideological and value position of social work. The centrality of values and beliefs and how they influence what we do is acknowledged. Allen (1993) argued that constructionism with its both/and approach comfortably accommodates values related to individuals, for example, self determination and broader societal values such as social justice. In any social work encounter, talking about what values mean for the client and social worker is considered relevant.

Thirdly, the emphasis on how people come to understand themselves and others offers social work a useful frame of reference for research and practice. For example, strengths based models of social work practice (Miley, O’Melia and Du Bois, 1995; Saleebby, 1992), solution focussed intervention (Berg and De Jong, 1996) and narrative approaches to therapy (Dean and Rhodes, 1998) incorporate social constructionist ideas.

A number of writers have also argued that social constructionism offers social work educators a framework for helping students to appreciate and to deal sensitively with the complexities of human problems (Goldstein, 1993; Simpson, 2000; Weick, 1993).

The choice of social constructionism as a theoretical framework for this study

As discussed earlier in this chapter, the purpose of this research study was to develop an understanding of how social workers respond to the problems of people living in informal settlements, and of how people living in informal settlements perceive social work. Given the history of social work in South Africa, and the different educational and cultural backgrounds from which social workers come, it was possible that different perspectives and realities might emerge. It was also possible that the issues being investigated might be context specific and that different perspectives of social work might be related to the research participants' particular experiences of social work. It was anticipated that there would be no single conception of what social work in informal settlements is or should be. The questions to be pursued also suggested that participants' values might impact on their perception of social work. All these aspects then suggested that a social constructionist framework would be appropriate for the study.

In this study therefore, I adopted the ontological position that reality is socially constructed and the study proceeds from the view that the reality in which we live has a strong subjective dimension (Berger and Luckmann, 1966). The truth about the world is not independent of individuals but is dependent on their perceptions, thoughts, and beliefs about the world and one therefore has to take into account values, meanings, and intentions in understanding human behaviour and the social context in which it occurs (Atherton, 1993). The research study therefore focussed on meanings and understanding the

respondents' perspectives.

This study proceeded from the view that the relationship between persons and their social environment is intimately connected. Reality is relative and located within specific contexts. This position then allows for multiple realities, which may be in conflict and which may change as their constructions become more informed and more sophisticated (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). The study therefore makes no claim to a single, absolute "truth" but acknowledges a multiplicity of views all of which are potentially helpful in understanding the issues being studied. Discovering and uncovering meaning was the primary goal of knowledge seeking within this study. The research study sought to understand collective meanings of shared experiences while also seeking to understand the more varied and idiosyncratic meanings of individual experiences. It also accepted that meanings can change and can be re-constructed over time.

The epistemological position adopted within a social constructionist paradigm rejects the notion of a dispassionate, non biased researcher (Gergen, 1999). Understanding develops when the researcher and researched interact and dialogue with each other and so together they create the findings of the study. In this study, dialogue took place between the researcher and social workers, the researcher and residents of informal settlements, as well as between social workers and residents of informal settlements. The research process worked towards a "dialogical consensus" (Gergen and Semin, 1990:9). This refers to a conversation or dialogue between the researcher and the research participant in which each try to understand each other. Different points of view are shared and are considered worthy of attention. Knowledge was thus gained by the researcher's participation and involvement in the research process (Guba and Lincoln, 1981; Ruckdeschel, 1985). Meanings do not exist externally "out there" but rather meaning is gained through the researcher's involvement in the

research process. Rather than contrive to create false circumstances in which the researcher had no influence on the outcomes, constructionist researchers consciously acknowledge their position in the research process.

Research methods within a social constructionist paradigm favour those which allow for the collection of in depth data and are generally referred to as qualitative methods. Data gathering typically involves multiple sources and methods. A single rigid data collection method would be restrictive and would exclude certain aspects (Ruckdeschel, 1985; Mark 1996). Research is an inductive rather than deductive process (Patton, 1980; Silverman, 2000). The emphasis is on discovery and it is anticipated that theory will emerge as the research progresses. Concepts, insights and understandings are thus derived from patterns in the data.

In adopting a social constructionist framework for this research study, I have not been unaware of or insensitive to the research challenges that this framework poses. Taken to its ultimate logical conclusion, social constructionist research should make no assumptions about objective reality (Franklin, 1995). Within a very strict social constructionist interpretation, it is what individuals say about problems that is important. No attempt is made to check out "facts" because "facts" are seen to be irrelevant and indeed, unknowable. Statistics, for example, are themselves seen to be socially constructed and thus add nothing to data analysis. A second interpretation of the social constructionist position is that an objectivist view is possible and that both objectivist interpretations and social constructionist interpretations help us to better understand the issues under study. A third view supports contextual social constructionist research that locates problems within their context. This view also accepts objectivist interpretations and claims that it is useful to use various sorts of evidence even though all these sources are socially constructed (Franklin, 1995). This study is firmly situated within this tradition of

contextual social constructionist research.

The desire to move from an exploration and understanding of the meanings given to social work in informal settlements by social workers and community members to a practical application of this knowledge has therefore called for some conceptual flexibility. While acknowledging that any practice of social work is contextually bound and constructed by the individuals concerned, I argue that shared meanings of social work practice can also be constructed. Examples of what social workers identify as successful practice in informal settlements can encourage others to consider these strategies while examples of unsuccessful practice can prevent social workers from "experimenting" and "re-inventing the wheel". Through a process of dialogue between social workers and with members of the community who receive social work services, a shared understanding of social work can begin to emerge.

OVERVIEW OF CHAPTERS

Chapter One provided the background to the research study and placed the study within the context of changing social and political conditions in South Africa. The nature of the problems to be explored in the study were discussed and the objectives of the study were presented. The value of the study for social work knowledge and practice was discussed. The rationale for using social constructionism as the theoretical framework for the study was presented.

Chapter Two presents an account of how the research study was conducted within a social constructionist framework. The research design, the research participants and the methods of data collection and analysis are described. Ethical issues and the way in which the study was conducted to conform to

standards of trustworthiness and authenticity is discussed and the chapter concludes with a discussion of the limitations of the study.

Chapter Three argues that social work is a socially constructed concept and that the purpose, function and methods of social work have been shaped by the context in which it operates. Social work in South Africa has been strongly influenced by western models of social work, so the chapter begins by providing an historical overview of the development of social work and pays particular attention to the conflicting and contrasting ways in which the mission of social work emerged. The chapter then goes on to trace the development of social work in South Africa and examines the influence of apartheid on social work practice. The present policy context with regard to welfare is then discussed and the challenge that this presents for social work in South Africa is explored.

Chapter Four begins with an analysis of the nature of informal settlements, their origins and growth and official responses to the phenomenon of informal settlements. Socio-economic aspects of life in informal settlements are described and the possible implications of this for social work practice are elucidated.

Chapter Five moves from a general discussion of informal settlements to detailed discussion of one informal settlement, Bhambayi. The chapter demonstrates how the unique history of this informal settlement and the interaction of political, social and economic forces contributes to the problems experienced by residents of Bhambayi and influences their response to the provision of social services. The work of the University of Natal social work student unit is described and the challenges and difficulties facing student social workers in this area are explored.

Chapter Six introduces the voices of one set of research participants and analyses the results of three focus groups that were held with community leaders in Bhambayi. Their interpretation of the problems experienced by residents of Bhambayi and how they perceive social work is presented.

Chapter Seven discusses the varied nature of social work in informal settlements. The range of problems addressed by social workers and the multiplicity of intervention methods used are discussed. The stories of three social workers are presented as a way of illustrating this. The chapter also examines the ways in which social workers in informal settlements are attempting to work within the social developmental welfare framework.

Chapter Eight presents the personal experiences of social workers and the severe difficulties facing social workers in informal settlements. It is argued that the physical conditions in informal settlements, unsupportive working conditions and feelings of being inadequate are the reasons why social workers find working in informal settlements stressful. As a counterpoint to this, the chapter also examines the strengths of social workers and residents of informal settlements, explores social workers personal coping mechanisms and examines positive experiences of working in informal settlements.

Chapter Nine concludes the study. The major findings of the study are summarised and suggestions for social work practice, education and research are made.

CHAPTER TWO

FROM THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK TO RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In Chapter One, the theoretical and philosophical assumptions underlying this study were described. This chapter operationalises these assumptions and illustrates the influence of a social constructionist framework on the choice of research design, the sampling strategy and choice of research participants and the methods of data collection and analysis.

The chapter begins with an overview of the research process and in table form, describes the aims of the research and the research design, research participants and methods of data collection relevant to each aim. The chapter then goes on to discuss each of these aspects in greater detail. The ways in which the data were analysed and how the data are presented in the inquiry product (this thesis) are discussed. The next section is devoted to issues of rigor and describes the way in which the research study was conducted in order to conform to standards of trustworthiness and authenticity. Ethical issues are then described and finally the limitations of the study are analysed.

THE RESEARCH PROCESS: AN OVERVIEW

Field work was undertaken from early 1999 to mid 2000 and proceeded in three phases which broadly co-incided with the aims of the research. The phases were as follows:

Phase one: Interviews with social workers

Phase two: Focus groups with community leaders in Bhambayi

Phase three: Social workers and residents of informal settlements participated in a workshop in order to dialogue about social work in informal settlements and to identify practice principles.

The following table summarises the research process and illustrates the key activities within each of the phases:

Table 2: Summary of the research process

AIM OF RESEARCH	RESEARCH DESIGN	RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS	DATA COLLECTION METHODS
Explore nature of social work services in informal settlements	Exploratory-descriptive research	22 social workers who had experience of working in informal settlements	In-depth interviews 2 focus groups
Explore community perceptions about social work services	Case study: Bhambayi	18 community leaders in Bhambayi	Review of social work in Bhambayi (reports, personal experience) 3 focus groups
Develop practice principles	Action research	18 social workers 12 residents of informal settlements	Search conference

THE RESEARCH DESIGN

In this study, three types of design were considered to be useful in providing a range of data that would answer the research questions in a manner consistent with research within a social constructionist framework. The research design had to be flexible enough to capture the multiple realities that were expected to emerge as the research proceeded. The types of design used were:

- Exploratory descriptive research design
- Case study design
- Action research design

Exploratory descriptive research design

An exploratory-descriptive research design was used to explore how social workers and community members construct, understand and give meaning to the practice of social work in informal settlements. It aimed to explore and describe the fairly recent phenomenon of social work service delivery in informal settlements in the Durban Metro region. While the 1990s have seen an increase in research studies generally in informal settlements, very few of these have focussed specifically on social work services within these areas. The study was also concerned with building a foundation of general ideas and with the generation of tentative insights into the nature of social work in informal settlements. The study was thus characteristically an exploratory-descriptive study (Grinnell, Jnr and Stothers, 1988; Marlow, 1998; Rubin, 1988).

Case study research design

In order to gain an in-depth understanding of social work as it is practised and understood within an informal settlement, a case study of Bhambayi was developed. A case study is "an intensive investigation of one unit" (Gilgun, 1994:371) and its defining characteristic is "its focus on just one instance of the thing that is to be investigated" (Denscombe, 1998:30). Case studies are useful for studying a problem in depth and for developing an understanding of a situation in context. The focus is on relationships and processes within a social setting and case studies thus tend to be holistic, rather than focus on isolated factors (Denscombe, 1998). Case studies make use of multiple sources of data - in this instance, published literature and reports, unpublished reports and field notes and my own direct experience on site contributed to the development of the case study. In addition, focus groups were held with community leaders to explore their perceptions about social work in their community.

Bhambayi was selected as a site for the case study for a number of reasons, not least of which were pragmatic considerations. I had already established

relationships with people in Bhambayi through my work in the area, I had access to research participants who were interested in the research study and who were willing to participate and my safety in the area was assured. Besides these pragmatic reasons, Bhambayi was suitable for the purpose of the research study. While in certain respects, Bhambayi has a unique history, it also shares common characteristics with other informal settlements. It was hoped that an in-depth study of this community would provide insights that would be useful for social workers working in other informal settlements.

Action research design

A modified action research design was used in the final stages of the research process. According to Greenwood and Levin (1998), action research is carried out by a researcher, together with members of an organisation or community wishing to improve their situation. In this study, social workers and representatives of informal settlements made up the “community”. The defining characteristics of action research, according to Denscombe (1998) are that it is practical and aimed at real life problems, in this case how to practice social work in informal settlements. By dealing with practical problems, change is seen as an integral part of the process and the active participation of those affected by the problem is essential.

In this study, social workers and residents of informal settlements defined the problems together and co-generated relevant knowledge by interpreting results and suggesting solutions.

RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

This section begins with a discussion of the sampling strategy used and then describes the research participants in each of the three samples that were chosen:

- Sample one: Social workers
Sample two: Community leaders in Bhambayi
Sample three: Social workers and residents of informal settlements

Sampling strategy

In constructionist research, it is important that the design should one, be flexible enough to accommodate multiple realities and two, that the boundaries of the research be determined by the problem being investigated (Rodwell, 1998). The participants, including the researcher, in a constructionist inquiry, all help to limit and shape the focus of the inquiry. Themes evolve during the inquiry and when no new perspectives or information emerges the study is said to be bounded and data redundancy achieved. A purposive sampling design facilitated the achievement of these objectives. Purposive sampling "is driven by the desire to illuminate the questions under study and to increase the scope or range of data exposed" (Kuzel, 1992: 32) and is considered to be the most appropriate sampling method for constructionist research. Attempts were therefore made to obtain a sample that provided a range of opinions and perceptions regarding the research questions. Sample design remained flexible and evolved as the study progressed. This allowed the researcher to consciously search for maximum variation. Research experience suggests that 12 - 20 sample sources are needed to achieve this (Kuzel, 1992). In this study, data redundancy was considered to be achieved after 22 social workers and 18 community members were interviewed.

Sample one: Social workers

Key informants, that is, those with expertise regarding the research problem (Gilchrist, 1992; Marlow, 1998) were identified as experienced social workers who worked in informal settlements. "Experienced social workers" were defined as those who had a physical presence in an informal settlement and who had the sanction of community leaders. These social workers were considered to be knowledgeable and able to speak with authority about their work. Social workers who had residents of informal settlements on their case

loads but who did not visit and work in such areas were not considered to be experienced for the purpose of this study. The total number of social workers (or the population) who work in informal settlements was not known.

Convenience sampling was used to select social workers for the study. I was aware from my own experience as a supervisor of student fieldwork practice that social workers at a number of organisations worked in informal settlements. The following organisations were therefore approached: Durban City Health Department; Durban Children's Society, Phoenix Child Welfare Society; Pinetown Child Welfare Society; the Department of Welfare; KwaZulu-Natal Survivors of Violence; Streetwise and Durban Association for the Aged.

In the first instance a telephone call was made to the senior person in each organisation. During this contact, I explained the purpose of my research and enquired about procedures for accessing the social workers. In all but one case, I was asked to follow this up with a formal written request. Six of the organisations responded positively and supplied a list of names of social workers who were prepared to participate in the research study. Permission was granted for these social workers to be interviewed during official working hours. Despite telephonic follow up with the remaining two organisations, despite interest in the research study by the individual social workers concerned and despite telephonic assurances that permission would be given, formal permission to conduct the research was not forthcoming. Social workers from these organisations were thus not included in the initial stage of the research. They were, however, invited to the workshop that took place in the third phase of the study.

Once permission had been granted, I approached each social worker individually, once again explained the purpose of the research, asked for their participation and set up a convenient time for the interview. All social workers approached in this way agreed to participate and showed enthusiasm for the research study. A total of 22 social workers participated. These social workers

worked in 44 informal settlements in the Durban Metro Region. The location of these informal settlements is illustrated in Figure 1 on page 35.

Sample two: Bhambayi community leaders

Community leaders were defined as those community members who play an important leadership role in the community or those who were actively involved in providing services in their communities. These may have been elected and nominated members of development committees, elected local authority representatives, and representatives of established women and youth groups. Because of my work in Bhambayi, I had access to the Bhambayi Reconstruction and Development Committee, which is made up of representatives from all sections of Bhambayi. I was therefore spared the difficulties of having to negotiate access to this community. A Zulu speaking research assistant undertook the actual recruitment of participants. This person had, the previous year, completed her social work fieldwork practice in Bhambayi and was well known to the community members. She had established good relationships with community leaders and therefore had credibility within the area. Again, convenience sampling was used and a degree of self-selection for the study was evident. The research assistant followed the correct channels of communication in Bhambayi by first discussing the research with the Bhambayi Reconstruction and Development Committee and gained permission for the focus groups to take place. The committee then set up the groups and recruited participants according to the criteria suggested by the research assistant.

A total of 18 community and group leaders participated in the study.

Sample three: Workshop participants- social workers and residents of informal settlements

All the social workers who had participated in the study, as well as representatives from the two organisations which had originally been approached but had not given permission, were invited to the workshop. They

Figure 1: Map of the Durban Metro Region showing the location of informal settlements in which social workers worked.



were each asked to invite two or three representatives from the informal settlements in which they worked to accompany them. The workshop was held at the University of Natal which is easily accessible by public transport and sufficient research funding had been budgeted to cover the transport costs of these participants. In addition, representatives from the Bhambayi community who had taken part in the focus group discussions were also invited.

Eighteen social workers (only four of these had not been part of the original sample of social workers) and 12 residents of informal settlements attended the workshop. The informal settlements represented at the workshop were: Sub 5, Siyaka, Bhambayi, Malukazi, Kennedy Road and Uganda. A colleague from the Centre for Social Work and four students who were doing field placements in informal settlements also attended the workshop. Unfortunately, a number of residents from one informal settlement, Cato Crest, did not arrive in time for the workshop - the social worker who had organised to fetch them waited at the appointed place for approximately 30 minutes before leaving. I later discovered that they had arrived soon after her departure and then decided to travel to the university on their own. By the time they reached the venue, however, the workshop was over and it was lunch-time. This incident illustrated very clearly an issue that was raised in the workshop - the frustrations of working in informal settlements with people whose understanding of time keeping is different from one's own.

DATA COLLECTION METHODS

Qualitative methods which allow for the collection of a rich variety of data are preferred in constructionist research (Rodwell, 1998). This section begins with a discussion of the researcher as the primary data collection instrument and then goes on to describe the three data collection methods that were used in this study, that is, unstructured interviews, focus groups and the search conference.

The researcher as the primary data gathering instrument

In contrast with positivist research which demands that the researcher adopt a neutral and objective stance, constructionist research acknowledges the role of the researcher in the research process. According to Rodwell (1998:57), "the human instrument is the primary data gathering instrument in constructivist research". No questionnaire can be flexible enough to accommodate multiple realities or sensitive enough to understand the meanings of an interaction. The researcher thus needs to bring to the research effort sufficient expertise and experience to be able to achieve this.

In this respect, I brought to the research process my experience and skills as a social worker as well as prior knowledge about the subject of the research inquiry. This prior knowledge included a comprehensive review of the literature in respect of the two main themes of this research - social work and informal settlements - and my experience of working in Bhambayi. As discussed in Chapter One, I have visited Bhambayi at least once a week for the duration of the academic year since 1995. Most of this time is spent with students, attending meetings and speaking with community leaders and residents of the area. On occasions, I have been invited to community meetings and special occasions such as the year end Sunday School party. This knowledge suggested the initial research questions which Rodwell (1998:55) referred to as "foreshadowed questions". These questions formed the tentative assumptions that guided the initial steps of the inquiry.

Constructionist researchers are also sceptical of the view that the researcher plays a purely facilitative role in gathering data and in encouraging the expression of the participants' feelings and perceptions. Rather, the meanings that arise from the data are co-constructed by the two people involved - the researcher and the research participant. In addition, the meanings are also influenced by the larger social system of which the individuals are part (TerreBlanche and Durrheim, 1999). In order to allow these meanings to

emerge, it was important to obtain the full understanding and co-operation of the research participants. I was able to achieve this by carefully explaining the research objectives and my motives, by patience and an absence of pressure to consent.

The importance of the natural setting

Because in constructionist research the context is considered to be such an important element in constructing reality, the research study should strive for a holistic understanding and should take place in the natural setting of the phenomenon being studied (Rodwell, 1998). In this study, for example interviewing social workers at their places of work enabled me to observe first hand some of their over crowded working conditions and to experience some of the frustrations of constant interruptions. These observations lent credibility to what they were saying about the challenges they faced in their work in a way that would not have been possible through, for example, a mailed questionnaire. Likewise, my familiarity with conditions in informal settlements helped me to contextualise both what social workers and community leaders said about the conditions in such areas and consequently the difficulties of working under such conditions.

Unstructured interviews

In depth, unstructured interviews were held with 14 of the 22 social workers during the period April 1999 to May 2000. (Focus groups were held with the remaining 8 social workers.) Each interview lasted between one and half and two hours and was tape-recorded with the permission of the participant. These interviews were all conducted in English.

Interviews are seen by constructionists as the "arena within which particular linguistic patterns (typical phrases, metaphors, arguments, stories) can come to life" (TerreBlanche and Durrheim, 1999 :53). Interviews were good sources of information in a study such as this because they provided a natural setting in which respondents could explore their perceptions of certain situations and

17-28
could express their own understanding in their own terms. In addition, they were flexible and they allowed the researcher access to serendipitous information as well as to non-verbal responses (Gochros, 1988; Patton, 1980).

Although the interviews were unstructured, they were not unplanned. The interview began with an open-ended question which was a general invitation to the social workers to talk about the work they were doing in informal settlements. This is sometime described as a "grand tour" question and is intended to elicit a rich story that is completely directed by the respondent (Gilchrist, 1992).

AB
NB
The questions I asked were initially framed by my own curiosity and prior knowledge of the topic. As the interviews progressed, research participants introduced new themes and these then were included in subsequent interviews. For example, themes that became increasingly obvious as the interviews proceeded and which were of interest to me were issues of danger, frustrations at what was perceived to be a lack of organisational support and personal coping mechanisms. Generally, interviews covered the following themes:

- a description of the type of work being done (casework, group work, community work)
 - the types of problems facing people in informal settlements and the extent to which social work could address those issues
 - use of theory to guide practice
 - education as preparation for working in informal settlements and on-going education
 - roles of community leaders and other service providers
 - organisational support for social work in informal settlements
 - personal safety issues related to high levels of crime and violence in informal settlements
 - personal coping mechanisms
- Defect

- positive experiences and rewards of working in informal settlements

Focus groups

According to Krueger (1988), focus groups consist of people with certain characteristics who provide data of a qualitative nature in a focussed discussion. Focus groups need to be small enough for everyone to have the opportunity to share insights but big enough to allow for a diversity of opinions. Typically focus groups consist of 7-10 people (Krueger, 1988) although some of the groups in this research study were smaller than this. This is not considered to be a limitation because all the groups, even the smaller ones, yielded useful and helpful information that ultimately helped to answer the research questions.

Focus groups use guided group discussions “to generate a rich understanding of the participants’ experiences and beliefs” (Morgan, 1998:11) and are therefore particularly useful when learning about “topics or groups of people who are poorly understood” (Morgan, 1998:12). In this study, I considered residents of informal settlements to be “poorly understood”. This was so for several reasons. The public image of informal settlements is generally not a positive one and this will become clearer in Chapter Four which deals with informal settlements in more detail. Social workers who work in informal settlements are also affected by these public images and in addition, have through their professional training and experience developed ways of thinking about their work that may in fact be very different from those of the people they need to work with. Morgan (1998:11) suggested that focus groups can “provide a window” into how people think and talk and are thus a powerful tool in helping people to understand their clientele better.

Focus groups provide opportunities for the researcher to understand the background of people’s thoughts and feelings by encouraging discussion around similarities and differences in opinions, through what Morgan (1998:12) referred to as a process of “sharing and comparing”. This enables focus group

participants to explain *why* they may feel differently to another person in the group and provides important insights in how people construct their perceptions of particular issues.

Focus groups, according to Morgan (1998), are also useful when you need a friendly, respectful research method as they convey a willingness to listen without being defensive and generally provide an enjoyable experience during which people feel they are listened to. This was felt to be particularly important in deciding to use focus groups in Bhambayi. People in this community have experienced much hardship and I considered it ethically important to choose a research method that would affirm them and provide a pleasant experience for them.

COMMUNITY LEADERS: BHAMBAYI: Three focus groups were held with community leaders and members of community groups in Bhambayi during the period May/June 1999. One group consisted of four members, one of five and one of nine.

Two of these groups were held in the Ghandi clinic (a building that once was a clinic and now serves as a community centre but is still affectionately called "the clinic") and one at the offices of the Bhambayi Reconstruction and Development Committee. This is relevant to note because physical boundaries in Bhambayi also denote political and social affiliations with some people from a particular area refusing to go into another area. The two venues used are in different parts of Bhambayi. By using both venues, I hoped to give as many people as possible a chance to participate in the groups and to avoid any accusation of bias against one section of the community.

A similar procedure was used during each of the groups held in Bhambayi. After culturally appropriate greetings and discussions about the weather and general events, I began the "business" of the meeting by thanking the participants for their presence and explaining the purpose of the research. At

this point, I gave participants an opportunity to ask questions. Questions relating to why had they been selected were asked and were answered honestly, that is, that they knew their community and I would like to hear their opinions. Once everyone was satisfied, I explained the procedure that would be used.

The following questions were posed:

- What are the main types of problems experienced by people in Bhambayi?
- Who helps people deal with these problems?
- What do you think “welfare” means?
- What do you think “development” means?
- What do you think social workers should do?
- What would be your ideal social work service?

Participants were encouraged to begin by brainstorming ideas and the responses were written on cards and placed on the table for all to see. This helped to focus the discussion, reduce repetition and provided a record of issues that were considered important. They were then encouraged to discuss each answer in more detail. The two smaller groups held at the clinic tended to adopt a “round robin” format with each member of the group speaking in turn. There appeared to be no dominant member and each person spoke freely. The group held at the Bhambayi Reconstruction and Development committee offices however was far more difficult to control. Conflict between internal leaders (which has been an on-going feature of political life in Bhambayi) was evident as they each tried to forcefully make their particular points. My experience as a group worker was invaluable in handling this group as I was able to acknowledge the responses of the dominant members and encourage the quieter members of the group to participate. All sessions ended with cool-drink and biscuits as a token of appreciation for their participation.

The focus groups in Bhambayi were not tape-recorded. Residents of Bhambayi, with their own particular history of conflict and violence, are still in many instances very distrustful of each other and of "outsiders". A knowledgeable community leader whose assistance I have always valued, advised me not to even broach the subject of tape recording with the community groups. Two groups were, by agreement with the participants, conducted in English and a research assistant was present at each of these meetings. Both of us took notes and compared these afterwards for accuracy and completeness.

The third group was conducted in both English and isiZulu and the research assistant and a social work student were present. All three of us took notes which were then compared and collated. This group proved to be problematic in terms of obtaining full and in-depth accurate perceptions. At one point, a group member spoke very harshly to a woman who had been talking inappropriately about her personal problems regarding childbirth. This exchange was not translated for my benefit. At another point, during a discussion about the role of church leaders in the community, there was a great deal of what seemed to me to be "conspiratorial" laughter. Church leaders were obviously seen as a problem and my request for more information was met with even more laughter. This was clearly an issue that was not considered appropriate to share with me. Observation of these group dynamics helped to increase my understanding of some of the difficulties social workers as "outsiders" might have in working with such groups. This once again illustrated the usefulness of being sensitive to the context and the importance of conducting research within a natural setting.

SOCIAL WORKERS: Two focus groups were held with eight social workers - one group consisted of three social workers and the other of five. This decision to use focus groups as a data collection method in both these instances was made by the social workers concerned. They felt this method would be less time consuming and more convenient for them. The focus group discussions

were held at the social workers' offices, were conducted in English and were tape recorded with the participant's permission.

The focus group discussions began in much the same way as the individual interviews with a general question about the kind of work they were doing in informal settlements. The discussion moved on to include the issues dealt with in individual interviews. One focus group session was plagued by continuous interruptions with clients needing attention - this particular interview took place at a small organisation with little administrative support and again illustrated the usefulness of conducting the research in a natural setting. Information about the pressures facing this group of social workers was evident without them having to verbalise it.

Record of participants

During all the interviews and focus group sessions, participants were asked to complete a very brief questionnaire in order to collect relevant demographic information (specifically age, gender and experience) and to provide a record of the research participants. In the case of the focus groups held in Bhambayi, this questionnaire was translated into isiZulu. It was anticipated that some group members would not be fully literate and would need assistance in completing the questionnaire. An offer of help was therefore made in a casual, off-hand way to the whole group. In this way, it was hoped that no-one would feel offended. This strategy appeared to be successful as filling in the questionnaire became a group effort and was completed without incident.

Workshop: The search conference

Search conferencing is widely used in action research strategies as a method of analysing, planning and designing actions to solve problems that are directly relevant to the people involved (Greenwood and Levin, 1998). The benefit of search conferences is the opportunities they present for dialogue and the co-generation of knowledge, both of which are important aspects to be considered within a social constructionist framework.

The workshop essentially served two purposes - one, to present the data that had been collected in the first two phases of the research in order to “check out” the extent to which this data accurately reflected the views of social workers and residents of informal settlements in order to come to a shared understanding of the problem under discussion, and two, to develop suggestions for practice that would guide social work in informal settlements.

The proceedings began with a welcome and a brief introduction to the planned agenda for the workshop presented in English. This was translated into isiZulu and it was at this point that the isiZulu speaking participants were asked, in isiZulu, whether there was a need for on-going translation. The decision, relayed in English, was that everyone was sufficiently confident about participating in English and that there was no need for on-going translations. The enthusiastic participation of the residents from informal settlements in the workshop bore testimony to this and language was thus not considered to be a problem.

The first session of the morning was devoted to a presentation of the preliminary findings of the study. A brief overview of the purpose of the study and an analysis of the participants was presented in order to provide all the workshop participants with an adequate background against which to view the results. The results were presented in terms of the following themes:

- Types of problems in informal settlements
- The role of the social worker in informal settlements
- Differences between welfare and development
- Challenges facing social workers in informal settlements
- Bhambayi’s “wish list” for an ideal social work service

Participants were invited to interrogate these results and to add their interpretations and comments. During the presentation of these results I was alert to the non verbal communication (nodding of heads, smiles, giggling) of

the workshop participants and was able to “earmark” those areas which participants seemed to respond most to for further attention and clarification. The verbal responses indicated that there was considerable agreement that the results accurately reflected the experiences of people in the workshop.

After a tea break, participants were broken into four smaller groups consisting of both social workers and residents of informal settlements. I assumed that everyone who was present was interested in the topic, was sensitive to the feelings of others, had important contributions to make and that small group discussions would be a useful way of enabling participants to dialogue with each other. Clearly, I was unable to be present at all the group discussions or to play a role in moderating the discussions. However, I did “visit” each group and my overall impression was that the groups functioned well and that discussions were inclusive.

Groups were asked to discuss a number of questions and to record their answers on a record sheet. The questions that had arisen from the major themes identified in the research to that point were:

- What do residents of informal settlements like about their place of residence/what do social workers working in informal settlements like about their work?
- What skills/knowledge do social workers bring to the helping relationship/what skills and knowledge do residents of informal settlements bring to the helping encounter?
- What are the main problems that social workers should deal with?
- What sort of continuum of services would residents like /could social workers provide?
- What should a social worker do in the case of danger?
- How should we deal with what seems to social workers to be community apathy?
- How should community conflict be dealt with?

- How can social workers improve their image in communities?
- What should residents of informal settlements do if they do not agree with what the social worker is doing?
- How will we know if we (social workers) are making a difference in informal settlements?

Following these group discussions, group spokespersons were invited to present their groups' findings to the large group. Key words were noted on large sheets of newsprint that enabled everyone to see both the common responses and the areas of difference (and which also provided a record of the proceedings). Finally, some specific suggestions about the way forward were made.

The workshop ended with a light finger lunch that also provided workshop participants a further opportunity to share experiences. It was at this point, that a resident from Sub 5 invited me to bring students to his community to "learn more about informal settlements" and another resident said for the first time she really understood what social workers were all about. Several students related that they now understood why they had been experiencing certain problems and I observed a number of social workers and residents from informal settlements other than the ones in which they worked, talking together.

DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis was not a separate phase which began only when all the data had been collected but was an on-going process that began with the first contact in the field and continued until the writing of this report. This section describes the strategies used to make sense of the voluminous texts produced by the data collection methods described above.

Recording and storage of data

note taking
only 3 tapes

The first step was to transcribe the tape-recorded interviews and focus groups with social workers. This was a tedious and time consuming task but provided an important opportunity to listen and re-listen to the interviews and to develop tentative ideas about emerging themes. Four tapes were transcribed by a research assistant and by listening to these tapes, I was able to engage in the same kind of preliminary analysis and also to check the accuracy of the transcription. Analysing these initial responses guided the formulation of further questions and set in motion a circular process of simultaneously collecting and processing data. This is similar to what Strauss and Corbin (1967, cited in Rodwell, 1998) described as the constant comparative method in grounded theory building. This method was used, however, to process the data and not to derive a theory for prediction and explanation as in traditional grounded theory (Rodwell, 1998).

The focus groups conducted in Bhambayi were not tape recorded for the reasons already discussed. However, comprehensive notes were made and these together with the transcriptions of the social worker interviews and focus groups were stored on a computer programme, QSR NUD*IST 4. This programme was designed specifically for the analysis of qualitative data and allows the researcher to manage data efficiently, to explore the data in a sensitive and detailed manner and to create abstractions, see patterns and interrogate emerging patterns (QSR NUD*IST Workshop handbook, 1997)

From emerging themes to analysis of discourses

NUD*IST allows one to create "index trees" and "nodes" which are, in effect, "containers" for emerging ideas, themes and categories. Index trees were created by reading the document on screen, highlighting a passage and thinking about where it should go. The programme offers the flexibility to change categories and re-organise data as one proceeds. For example, a node created early on in the analysis process was called "type of problem" - however it soon became clear that social workers talked about "problems" in

different ways. One way was to describe the "cases" they dealt with and another was to describe the problems they experienced personally and professionally in working in informal settlements. As the data analysis proceeded the categories or nodes were refined to more accurately reflect the data.

Once this process was complete I could then begin to engage in a process of analysing the discourses and examining more closely what research participants said in each of the categories that had been identified. Discourses can be described as "broad patterns of talk -systems of statements- that are taken up in particular conversations, not the speeches or conversations themselves" (TerreBlanche and Durrheim, 1999:156). One of the underlying assumptions of the social constructionist approach is that people use language to "do" things - in examining what social workers, for example, said about child abuse, I began to ask questions about the implications of this for what they did about it. Was there a difference, for example, in how they dealt with child abuse if they talked about concern for the child as opposed to control of the perpetrator, and was this way of approaching problems consistent or unique to this particular problem?

Negotiating the results

Because social constructionism emphasises the co-construction of knowledge, it was important that I regularly check that my understanding of the issues being discussed reflected accurately the research participants' points of view. I did this in two ways. Firstly, during the interviews and focus groups I regularly paraphrased in order to check my understanding. This not only helped me to clarify my own understanding of what was being said but also indicated to the respondent my desire to understand their point of view.

The second, and more formal way in which I negotiated results was through the workshop (which was described in a previous section).

The inquiry product

The negotiated results form the data analysis chapters of this study. The analysis is presented in various forms consistent with a social constructionist approach. Attention is paid to ideographic interpretations, that is, the perspective of participants is seen to be important and where possible and useful to illustrate this, the actual words of participants are quoted. Detailed descriptions of the contexts are provided in the form of stories and case studies so that the data can be interpreted in context.

ISSUES OF QUALITY CONTROL

Research within the positivist paradigm must be reliable and valid. Reliability refers to the extent to which a data collection instrument provides consistency in measurements or observations, while validity refers to the extent to which the instrument measures what it is supposed to measure (Marlow, 1998). It is in relation to these aspects that positivists have criticised qualitative research methods. In qualitative research, for example, the data collection instruments are more open ended than in quantitative research and the data are as much a reflection of the researcher as that of the research instrument (Gilchrist, 1992). Research findings in qualitative research do not claim to be absolute and conclusive, or even, necessarily, replicable (Goldstein, 1991).

While concepts of reliability and validity should not be used to judge the quality of qualitative research, qualitative research should nevertheless be rigorous and it should answer the research questions under study. Two ways of doing this have been identified in the literature: the extent to which the data are trustworthy and the extent to which they are authentic (Rodwell, 1998).

Trustworthiness

Standards of trustworthiness were developed in response to positivist concerns

for a valid inquiry product. Trustworthiness demonstrates "elements necessary to ensure confidence in the research findings" (Rodwell, 1998:96). During this study I attempted to ensure that the data were trustworthy and that the research consumer can "believe" the data. The following table demonstrates the steps that were taken in order to achieve this (Gilchrist, 1992, Lincoln and Guba, 1985, Rodwell, 1998).

Table 3: Steps taken to ensure the trustworthiness of data

STANDARD	STRATEGIES
Credibility - how accurate are the findings?	Prolonged engagement Member checks Triangulation
Dependability - were the procedures used to gather, analyse and interpret data within accepted constructionist practice?	Triangulation Good recording of data
Confirmability - how reasonable is the logic and is the theory developed derived from the data	Triangulation Member checks Audit trail
Transferability - can the lessons learned and knowledge constructed in one context have usefulness in another context?	Use of thick descriptions

Prolonged engagement was achieved through purposive and intensive contact with the research participants and in one particular informal settlement, Bhambayi. This has been documented in this chapter.

Member checks, where data is recycled back to informants for comment, were used. This was achieved in two ways as described previously in this chapter. During the actual individual and group interviews, I frequently paraphrased and summarised what people were saying to ensure that my understanding was accurate and a workshop was held during which the results of the study were

presented to research participants.

Two types of triangulation were used. One, data were collected from different sources and two, different data collection methods were used. The data collected in these ways could be compared and helped in developing a fuller understanding of reality as the research participants perceived and constructed it.

Detailed records were kept of the research process and the data collected. This was discussed in the section outlining data analysis. In addition an “audit trail” has been left in the sense that this research report describes methods and procedures used in detail. In this way, the reader can interpret the data in the light of these procedures.

The research report makes use of thorough descriptions that are rich, dense and detailed. These are sometimes referred to as “thick descriptions” (Geertz, 1973, cited in Rodwell, 1998), as opposed to “thin” descriptions which are merely factual. Thick descriptions provide detailed information about the context within which the research took place. In addition, they describe researcher-informant transactions. In this way, then, they provide a framework for evaluation of the data. From these thick descriptions readers can determine whether the results are transferable, that is, whether the evidence from one set of data which is contextually bound could be helpful in another context.

Authenticity

Authenticity is a dimension of constructionist research rigor that focuses on the research process rather than on the research product (Rodwell, 1998).

Fairness is the criterion for authenticity that has been most well developed in the literature and it “involves the evenhanded representation of all viewpoints” (Rodwell, 1998:107). Different perspectives and constructions of reality should

be allowed to emerge and should be considered seriously for merit and worth. Participation in the research process was facilitated by the methods used for data collection and particularly by the workshop that allowed the different voices to be heard and responded to. These voices are recorded in this research report and where disagreements exist, these are fairly reported.

ETHICAL ISSUES

The integrity of the researcher is essential in obtaining research findings that are accurate, trustworthy and which contribute to knowledge building. This study was carried out in a professional manner and ethical standards were maintained. This section details the ways in which this was ensured.

Factors relating to the research process

Researchers have an ethical responsibility to their profession and to the research participants that the research study will produce knowledge that is worth knowing (Kvale, 1996). From the beginning, the research was carefully planned to contribute to social work knowledge and practice. In the planning phase, discussions were held with colleagues within the academic community as well as social work practitioners regarding the relevance and potential usefulness of the study. These discussions helped frame the research objectives and account for the decision to move from an understanding of what social work in informal settlements is to an action phase in which suggestions for practice were made.

A further ethical consideration concerns the accuracy and honesty of the reporting. Throughout the research process, efforts were made to ensure that data gathering and data processing were accurately undertaken. Interviews and focus groups with social workers were all tape recorded (with the permission of the participants). These were then accurately transcribed. In some instances, the transcription was however, altered to make for easier

reading. Some respondents used "umm's" excessively while one respondent began almost every sentence with a repetition, for example, "The thing is, the thing is....., when the client, when the client....." In each of these cases, the meaning was not altered and a note was made on the transcript that this had been done. For reasons already explained, tape recordings were not made of the group interviews held in Bhambayi. However, more than one person took notes which were compared for accuracy and completeness. In this way, every effort was made to accurately reflect the contents of the group discussions. Throughout the writing up of the study, I have tried to accurately reflect the research processes. In reporting the data, I have used as far as possible the voices of the respondents.

Feedback to respondents in the form of a workshop provided an opportunity to clarify issues and provided a further mechanism to check the accuracy of the data.

Factors relating to the researcher- participant relationship

Every effort was made to ensure that contact between the researcher and the research participants was conducted in an ethically acceptable manner. Sarantakos (1993) suggested seven ways in which this should be done. Firstly, there ought to be proper identification. In this study, I clearly identified myself to each participant. The reason for the contact was also explained. In the case of the focus groups with community leaders, it was also clearly explained that although I hoped their contribution would indirectly benefit them in the future in terms of improved services, I was at that point not in a position to offer anything concrete. There was no "reward" for participating in the study.

Secondly, the purpose of the interview and the types of information being requested should be made clear at the outset. During the initial contacts to set up appointments as well as at the beginning of each contact, I outlined the types of issues that I would like to explore. The research study did not include any stressful or deeply personal questions that could lead to negative effects

any stressful or deeply personal questions that could lead to negative effects on participants.

Thirdly, the welfare of the respondent should be protected. While there was no physical danger to any of the respondents, care was taken not to embarrass or cause any discomfort to participants. For example, in the focus groups there was at times, potential for group conflict. This had nothing to do with the research study but was a function of leadership struggles within the community. Using group work skills, I affirmed the contributions of each person and assured them that in this setting different views and opinions were valued.

Free and informed consent is the fourth aspect to be considered. After explaining the purpose of the research, I specifically asked the question, "would you be prepared for me to interview you/ ask you some questions". While this theoretically gave participants the chance to say no, I suspect that my previous positive relationships with many of the respondents influenced their decision to answer in the affirmative. In addition, because the research had been sanctioned by their employers, they may have felt obliged to participate. Likewise, I suspect that initially some of the community members felt they "owed" me something and felt obliged to participate.

The fifth, sixth and seventh aspects related to issues of privacy, confidentiality and anonymity. During interviews and focus group sessions I was sensitive to how participants were feeling in relation to issues being discussed. In some cases, "treasonable texts" occurred when participants criticised their employers and came across as disloyal. One person commented "I am only telling you this because I trust you". I assured this person that the information would be handled sensitively and that no identifying particulars would be provided in the final report. In addition, the information gained during the study would be used only in this study and for no other purposes. In reporting the results of this study, social workers are identified by pseudonyms. It is however, possible,

that in some cases, the astute reader may be able to make educated guesses as to the identity of certain social workers and for this reason, identifying particulars are kept to a minimum. In cases of “treasonable texts”, or when ethical standards are compromised, the identity of the social worker is withheld in order to protect the privacy of that social worker

LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH STUDY

No research study is perfect and although every effort was made to conduct a research study that was rigorous and authentic, several limitations must be noted and the results interpreted in the light of these limitations.

Factors relating to the sampling strategy

In view of the fact that social workers within the government service play an important role in the implementation of the state’s poverty alleviation plans, their input regarding their role and the challenges of working in the government sector would have been interesting and would have added value to the study. Three social workers from one government office did participate in the workshop and thus to some extent this limitation was overcome.

Possibility of respondent bias

Most of the social workers who took part in the study are known to me and I taught several of them at university while they were studying. Some of them had also been part of the student-unit at Bhambayi and I had supervised their fieldwork practice course. These social workers were well aware of my interest in this field as well as my biases and approaches to social work practice. While I was careful to explain that it was **their** perceptions and experiences I wanted to hear about, it is possible that what they said was influenced by their knowledge of me and their relationship with me. That some of these social workers gave accounts of their practice that I would not have tolerated as their

student supervisor, leads me to believe that for the most part, social workers were genuine in their accounts of their experiences.

Language issues

All the residents of informal settlements involved in this research study were isiZulu speaking, as were nine social workers who were interviewed. Except for one focus group during which an interpreter was used, the language medium in which the data collection took place was English. It may be, that in some instances, research participants did not express themselves as accurately in English as they would have done had they been speaking their mother tongue. In trying to understand what participants meant, I have been sensitive to this and did, where it was possible, try to clarify what people meant by certain expressions. In one focus group, for example, people talked about social workers doing “foot-patrols” which to me had connotations of social workers acting as policemen and checking up on people. Further questions about this revealed that this was not what was meant but that the person did not have an English word to describe what he meant. What he meant was that social workers should walk about in the community and visit people in their homes. In this way, they would become familiar to the people in the community and be better able to understand the problems of people in informal settlements. My experience of working in Bhambayi, as well as with students whose second language is English, helped sensitize me to these issues of expression and my interpretation of what people said proceeds from this sensitivity.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has provided an overview of the research process which was conducted within a social constructionist framework. The research design, the research participants and the methods of data collection were described in relation to each of the main aims of the study. The process of data analysis and issues related to the inquiry product, quality control, ethical considerations and

limitations of the study were examined.

Research in social work never occurs in a vacuum and takes place within an existing body of knowledge. In the next chapter, I examine the literature related to the purpose, functions and mission of social work within historical and contemporary perspectives. This provides the overall context for understanding how social workers in this study have come to see themselves and the work they do.

CHAPTER THREE

SOCIAL WORK: HISTORICAL AND CONTEMPORARY PRESPECTIVES

Social work is "an art, a science, a profession that helps people to solve personal, group and community problems and to attain satisfying personal, group and community relationships through social work practice, including casework, group work, community work, administration and research". (Thackeray, Farley and Skidmore, 1994:8)

Social work emerged as a way of responding to people's problems, and specifically the problems of the poor, in the late 19th and early 20th century. It has come to be, as the above definition reflects, an umbrella term for therapeutic work with individuals, families and groups, educative and preventative programmes, community action and social reform. It addresses a wide spectrum of social problems and depending on the nature of the setting, social work can be found in child and family welfare organisations, specialist organisations dealing with specific disabilities, the aged or special interest groups, government welfare departments, schools, hospitals, the criminal justice system and community organisations. Complicating matters further is the fact that other people also do what social workers do - teachers, nurses, ministers of religion, psychologists, community development workers and child and youth care workers do counselling, run groups and also help communities develop. Social work as a profession has, what Elliot (1993:22) aptly described as, a "diffuse professional identity" and is, according to Bar-On (1994), an amorphous and ill defined profession.

That social work has come to adopt such a broad definition of itself is the result of a long and complex history during which social work has responded to and been shaped by the dominant social, economic and political discourses of the

day. This chapter adopts the view that social work practice is shaped by "needs of the time, the problems they present, the fears they generate, the solutions that appeal, and the knowledge and skills available" (Reynolds, quoted in Germaine and Gitterman, 1980:483). In tracing the development of social work both internationally and in South Africa, this chapter examines the forces that have shaped social work practice and have impacted on its purpose, function and methods. It thus provides the background against which to examine how South African social workers, and for the purpose of this study, specifically those working in informal settlements, have come to see themselves and the work they do.

The chapter begins by focussing on the development of social work in the western world and pays particular attention to the contradictory and conflicting ways in which the mission and methods of social work emerged. The chapter then goes on to examine social work in the South African context. Firstly, it discusses the two major forces that shaped the development of social work in South Africa - the adoption of western models of social work and the influence of apartheid policy. Secondly, it examines social work in post apartheid South Africa and gives specific attention to the adoption of a social developmental welfare model and the implications of this for social work practice. The chapter concludes with an examination of the challenges facing social work in contemporary South Africa.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIAL WORK IN THE WESTERN WORLD

Notions of social work in the western world, particularly from England and the United States of America, have strongly influenced the development of social work in South Africa. This section examines the emergence of social work as a profession in the western world as this provides the basis for understanding

how social work came to be constructed in South Africa.

Early beginnings

Professions are the means by which people specialise in carrying out functions that were traditionally performed by the family and the community in which the individual lived (Specht and Courtney, 1994). In such traditional societies, the family, the extended kinship group, the church and the community cared for orphaned children, the elderly and the disabled. Feudal society in England, for example, was highly stratified and people were accorded specific rights and responsibilities according to their status. Social work began to emerge as a profession when these traditional forms of family and community support began to break down, mainly as a result of industrialisation and urbanisation. As societies became more complex, a wider range of services was required to meet the needs of individuals and families and new forms of institutional support, such as social work, therefore had to come into being.

Before social work emerged as a way of helping people, the problems of the poor were dealt with in different ways - piety, patronage, the Poor Laws and philanthropy (Specht and Courtney, 1994) and elements of each of these systems is still to be found in modern day social work. Piety is based on the Judeo-Christian tradition of caring for the poor. Caring for the poor was seen as service to God and as carrying out His commandments. The adoption of Christianity as the official state religion by the Roman Empire provided opportunities for the development and expansion of the early church and provided the organisational and ideological basis for charity giving (Payne, 1996). Elements of piety are evident in contemporary social work in the form of the numerous religious bodies that provide welfare services and facilities.

Patronage was another way of dealing with the "deserving" poor. Specht and Courtney (1994) described the patron as a type of middleman – someone who

could select members of the lower classes who showed promise of development and who would most likely succeed as members of the upper classes. Wealthy benefactors would then support that person in terms of providing employment, financial support and legal assistance. The social work roles of broker and advocate in which social workers represent their clients' interests are examples of where social work still provides patronage to the lower classes.

The Elizabethan Poor Laws (early 17th century) were an early attempt by the English government to ensure that their local communities cared for poor people. Local authorities had to care for the poor who originated in that area. English settlers took these notions with them when they colonised the Americas and Africa and influenced the development of welfare policy in these newly occupied territories. One of the main features of the Poor Laws was that income support was kept at very low levels to discourage dependency. The legacy of the Elizabethan Poor Laws lives on in the residual welfare system and the means testing of public assistance.

Philanthropy was the giving of charity by the wealthier classes to the poorer classes. Some successful landowners and industrialists in the 18th and 19th centuries established private charities whose functions were to provide relief in the form of food, provisions and money to the poor. There were no universal criteria for determining who could access this relief - each charity was run in its own way and according to its own purposes. Many welfare organisations are today dependent on charitable trusts for funding.

Social work therefore emerged from a social welfare system that was based on these four elements, piety, patronage, the Poor Laws and philanthropy.

The influence of charities and settlements on the development of social work

In the latter half of the 19th century, two distinct movements influenced the development of social work. Both of these movements focussed on problems of poverty but each approached the problems from different perspectives. The Charity Organisation Societies in Britain and America focussed on helping individuals who were experiencing difficult times and focussed on rehabilitating such individuals. Problems were thus seen to be located within the person. At much the same time, the Settlement House movement was implementing a different approach that focussed more on the community aspects related to poverty. These two movements will now be discussed in more detail.

The early Charity Organisation Societies (COS) were an attempt to "rationalise charity giving" (Specht and Courtney, 1994: 71) and they aimed to eliminate indiscriminate giving to the poor which, it was believed, contributed to the continuation of the problems of poverty. Rather, they sought to investigate each case carefully and to ensure that assistance was only given to those who were deserving of such help. This practice reflected the view that poverty and social problems were the result of individual pathology and could thus be alleviated by individual rehabilitation. Mary Richmond, who has come to be associated most closely with the charity organisation societies movement, argued, for example, that unemployment was evidence of a persons inefficiency or unwillingness to work (Fox, in Franklin, 1990). A thorough investigation of the character of help seekers was thus encouraged. "Friendly visitors", as those early workers for the COS were called, were in effect, gate keepers to welfare and those who were not considered to be morally deserving (for example, the beggar who was too lazy to work, the drunk and the prostitute) were rejected (Brieland, 1990).

From the COS came social work's tradition of focussing on the individual but

also its function of social control. Those early social workers represented the responsibility of the wealthy classes to uplift the poor but at the same time they were required to ensure that their resources were not wasted on those who were undeserving. The community organising function of social work also has its roots in the early attempts by the COS to regulate and co-ordinate charity giving.

The first settlement house was Hull House in Chicago, and was founded by Jane Adams in 1889. Her goal was to improve the lives of the poor in the neighbourhood by living among them and by working with local residents to change the social and economic conditions that caused poverty. Jane Adams had seen a similar concept in England at Toynbee Hall which had been established in 1884. Here Oxford University students stayed for a few months to serve the poor (Brieland, 1990).

The settlement house movement therefore sought to deal with issues of poverty by focussing on improving social conditions. Originally the settlement house movement concentrated on helping new immigrants assimilate into American society. Problems were defined in terms of the context and the environment. Workers lived among the poor and assisted them in their day-to-day concerns. A network of services, including group activities for education and recreation were easily accessible to neighbourhood residents. Some settlement houses became centres for research and debate and lobbied for better housing and working conditions (Franklin, 1990).

From the settlement house movement, social work has inherited a rich tradition of working with groups. Early settlement house workers worked with groups of all kinds - groups for learning skills such as sewing and English literacy for immigrants, reading groups and groups for working together to improve housing and health issues (Wohl, 1988). Those early workers who networked

and collaborated with other groups, organisations and churches to achieve their aims, practised what is today called community work.

The dual perspective of social work

From these two movements, both concerned with caring for the poor, came the profession of social work. The different emphases have been cause for debate ever since, and in many instances have polarised the profession of social work.

Even in those early days, Mary Richmond and Jane Adams criticised each other. Richmond saw the settlement houses as doing harm by "their cheap sprinkling sort of charity" (in Brieland, 1990:135). Adams disliked the term "social worker" and refused to call the people she worked with "clients" or "cases" or to keep records (Margolin, 1997). She distanced herself from the COS movement and spoke of the "guarded care with which relief is given" to a charity recipient (in Brieland, 1990:135).

The debate between these two perspectives has been framed in different ways - personal troubles versus public issues, clinical casework versus community work, micro practice versus macro practice. At one extreme is an emphasis on private issues and the recovery, rehabilitation or self actualisation of the individual while at the other, is an emphasis on collective needs, social action and social reform (Franklin, 1990).

In many respects, this debate has echoed the on-going debate between capitalist and democratic values (Franklin, 1990). A capitalist outlook values a strong free market economy and an emphasis on individualism and survival of the fittest. Social work within this ideological framework focuses on helping the individual to change and adjust to the demands of the society. Social work thus becomes part of the capitalist state apparatus and can be seen as a part of a system of power relationships that serve to maintain the interests of the

dominant ideology (Payne, 1998). Democratic values on the other hand include notions of social responsibility, participation and the use of social action. Within this ideological framework, there is far more focus on social concerns and the needs of the disadvantaged.

Despite the early focus on helping the poor by both the traditions of the COS and the settlement house movements, clinical practice and the emphasis on the individual began to attain dominance in the 1920s. Social work began to move increasingly towards a psychological understanding of human problems and away from identification with the poor and efforts towards social action (Franklin, 1990). One explanation for this centres on social work's desire and need to be accepted as a profession and this in turn needs to be seen in the context of the experiences of those early social workers. In dealing with individual and family problems, social workers (mainly women) needed to collaborate with doctors and lawyers (mainly men) who viewed social workers as well meaning volunteer amateurs. Their understanding of the problems was thus often ignored, both because they were women in a male dominated society and because they were not professionals. There were also practical issues relating to finances. There appeared to be a reluctance to pay early social workers an adequate salary as they were not seen as professional experts and because they were bound to "soon get married", and by implication, married women were not expected to work outside of the home (Austin, 1983:559).

It was in this context that Flexner (a male with specialised knowledge of medical education) outlined six elements that hallmark a "profession." He stated; "professions involve essentially intellectual operations with large individual responsibility, derive their raw material from science and learning, this material they work up to a practical and definite end, possess an educationally communicable technique, tend to self organisation, are becoming

increasingly altruistic in motivation" (Flexner, 1915, quoted in Austin, 1983: 561). Based on this, he concluded that while social work was a useful activity it did not constitute a profession. Social work appeared to accept this diagnosis of itself and has sought ever since to establish itself as a legitimate profession according to these criteria.

Freud's theories of human development and behaviour (which gained increasing popularity in the early part of the 20th century) provided a convenient theoretical base for social work practice and held promise for the development of social work's own body of theory. However, these psychological theories explained individual behaviour and provided very little assistance in understanding societal concerns and how to change social structures. This move towards a more psychological explanation of problems is illustrated in the following example. Mary Richmond's first book entitled "Social Diagnosis" published in 1917 emphasised the social environment and financial distress rather than intra psychic conflict (Abramovitz, 1998). Several years later, however, Jarret of the Smith College social work programme re-examined Mary Richmond's case studies and felt they clearly involved psychiatric problems. Mary Richmond (although she never lost sight of the importance of environment in people's problems) subsequently included a discussion of personality problems in her new book "What is social casework" published in 1922.

Focussing on clinical work within a medical model also gave social work a way of getting rid of the stigma of working only with poor people. With the emphasis on intrapysic problems, rather than poverty, social workers were able to extend their work to include middle class people (Abrahamvitz, 1998). This was clearly seen to be a positive feature that could increase the professional status of social workers.

From the very beginning the development of social work was also influenced by society's adoption of the scientific method. To gain acceptance and respectability, social work had to move to a more scientific method of knowledge production. The medical model, with its emphasis on diagnosis and treatment, provided the means to achieve this. Within this frame of reference, it was inevitable that there would be more focus on individual pathology and methods of treatment that could more closely resemble medical treatment than on issues of social change that would seem more like social movements.

By 1929, casework had emerged as the "cornerstone of social work practice" (Franklin, 1990: 67). The report of the Milford conference held that year stated that social casework was a definite entity and that it had all the aspects of the beginnings of science (Franklin, 1990).

Social work thus became more institutionalised and part of community life and lost its focus on societal change. In 1929, Porter Lee argued that as social work did this it left behind its emphasis on being a "cause" for justice, and became a "function", that is, an organised effort that ultimately supports the whole community (cited in Payne, 1996).

There have however always been criticisms within social work regarding its emphasis on clinical work, for serving as agents of social control and for ignoring the needs of the poor. There have, in fact, been periods of history when the focus shifted to social action and social reform. The economic problems of the great depression (1930s), for example, saw social work in the United States of America petitioning for federal relief programmes and calling for slum clearance and public housing (Franklin, 1990). The 1960s were another period during which the pendulum appeared to swing in the direction of social reform. The growth of the civil rights movement and increased struggles in American society regarding class, racial and gender issues meant that a

focus on poverty once again became respectable (Abramovitz, 1998; Franklin, 1990). At this time, too, social work was rocked by effectiveness studies which showed casework intervention achieved little (Fischer, 1973) and spurred social workers to consider again their mission.

Towards an integrated model for social work

During the years, 1930-1970, social work theory was largely methods based (Gray, 1994). Although casework dominated, group work and community work as methods of social work grew during this time. In 1935, a group of social workers interested in social group work got together at the American National Conference on Social Work and in the following year a national association for the study of social group work was formed. By 1955, when a number of organisations of social workers came together in the USA to form the National Association of Social Workers (NASW), social group work was accepted as a method of social work.

Group work is based on the understanding that human beings are strongly dependent on other human beings for their well-being. The actual practice of group work developed in various ways with a foot in each of the clinical and community camps. Influenced by psychoanalytic theories, clinical groups sought to heal and rehabilitate individuals. Other groups, influenced by the settlement house tradition, focussed on social change. In 1966, Papell and Rothman, identified three models of group work which illustrate the diversity of approaches to group work practice:

- **Social goals model:** This model has its roots in the earliest traditions of social group work and attempts to deal with problems related to the social order. Historically, the settlement houses and community centres used this approach in developing services. The approach is based on the premise that individuals working together within a group could positively impact on their social conditions. Through membership of a

group the individual would develop a “social consciousness” and “social responsibility” (Reid, 1981: 202).

- Remedial model: This model has also been variously referred to as the medical model, the rehabilitative model, or the therapeutic model and the focus is on using the group to help individual group members to resolve or better manage their own individual problems.
- Reciprocal model: Also known as the interactionist model, this model recognises the symbiotic relationship between individuals and society and seeks to develop a system of mutual aid within groups.

The early Charity Organisation Societies represented the first attempts to co-ordinate and systematise social welfare services. This became known as “community organising”. Efforts were directed towards preventing the duplication of services. The Lane report of 1939 was one of the first attempts to define community organising as a method of social work. In 1946, the National Association for the study of community organisation was formed and in 1955, it too, amalgamated with other professional organisations to form the NASW and firmly entrenched community work as a method of social work.

In 1974, Rothman identified three models of community work:

- Locality development: Also known as grassroots development, this model emphasised working with local communities to improve conditions within those communities.
- Social planning: This referred to the development, co-ordination and effectiveness of service and resource provision.
- Social action: Social action referred to mobilising groups of people to effect change in social conditions.

These three methods of social work practice straddle the dual perspective of social work. Casework emphasises individual needs and concerns (private

issues) while community work emphasises the environment (public concerns). Group work has a foot in both camps, so to speak, with some types of groups focussing on individual concerns and others on social aspects. The strength of group work as a method, however, lies in its ability to fulfil both these functions simultaneously.

Despite this dual perspective, social work theorists have been engaged in an on- going struggle to integrate these two different priorities. A major challenge for social work, according to Franklin (1990:76) is how to "integrate the profession's social treatment technologies with its knowledge of social change into one coherent strategy". Several writers see this dualism as strength and have suggested ways in which social work can develop an integrated approach to practice and some of these will now be discussed.

One attempt to create an integrated model for social work practice was the development of the eco-systems perspective which it was hoped would serve as a "general metatheory...that provides for the many, and at times, contradictory, purposes and activities of social workers" (Siporin, 1980:507). Drawing on concepts from systems theory and ecology, this perspective has three main tenets: a) all phenomena are interconnected, b) all living systems are self organising and c) they all follow patterns of growth and change (Capra, 1982).

Problems are therefore assessed and understood in terms of a systems analysis and once this is done a decision about how to intervene can be made. The idea of levels of intervention comes from this perspective. Social work can intervene at an individual, family, community, or societal level. In this perspective, there is no need to polarise the individual and the social - the interaction between them is important and the social worker is able to intervene at whatever level is best suited to intervention. Thus casework and group work

methods can be used to intervene at micro and mezzo levels and are best suited to helping people deal with personal problems. Community work (which in any event, is practised through the medium of groups) can be used to intervene at macro or community levels and is best suited to dealing with social issues.

The strength of the eco-systems perspective is the framework that it provides for the holistic and comprehensive understanding of problems and while the eco-systems perspective remains popular in social work, it has its critics. The major concern has been its high level of generalisation and abstraction and therefore the difficulty in operationalising it and researching its usefulness (Brower, 1988).

Other suggestions that attempt to integrate the dual perspectives of social work have also been made. One is that social work draw on the insights of feminist theory to develop an integrated practice model (Morell, 1987). Feminism, like social work, has a dual focus on both the individual and society, but unlike social work has not polarised these positions. Morell (1987) argued that the feminist approach to integrating the personal and the political offers social work a theoretical understanding of why problems exist and as well as a process through which they can be addressed.

Yet another suggestion has been that social development theory should be adopted as it provides an integrative approach and offers a framework which addresses the micro-macro continuum (Elliot, 1993) and this perspective is discussed in greater detail later on in this chapter.

Despite these attempts, the integration of the dual perspectives in social work has been, as Morell (1987) said, elusive. She nevertheless argued that this dual focus is a strength because it affirms that both individual and structural

changes are needed to deal effectively with problems. This, in her opinion, is what makes social work unique. Similarly, Haynes (1998) was of the opinion that the future of social work depends on us celebrating and publicizing our multiple skills and perspectives.

Not everyone however believed that social work should continue to strive for a unified theory. Austin, for example, suggested abandoning all attempts at "imposing an image of intellectual unity on a profession that is marked by a diversity of theoretical perspectives and a diversity of professional tasks" (1983:374). Wakefield (1996) wondered whether social work even needed a coherent, unified theory and he pointed out that professions such as medicine have a number of theories and methods that guide, for example, the practice of surgery, radiology or pharmacology within medicine.

Other writers have been especially damning in their condemnation of social work's emphasis on therapy and assert that the two perspectives can never be reconciled. Specht and Courtney (1994), for example, referred to social workers as "unfaithful angels" in the title of their book and accused social work of abandoning its mission, which was to serve the poor. Proof of this, they pointed out, was to be seen in the large numbers of social workers in the United States of America moving into private practice as therapists or describing themselves as using psychotherapy as their major mode of practice. This, according to the authors, is not social work. Social work should be about building communities and eradicating highly fragmented services. Social workers should be helping to develop a sense of community, so that people can help and care for one other. Community service centres should provide a universal, comprehensive, and accessible service to the community. Education, self help groups, research and social action should be the terrain of social workers. In addition, care and control functions should be separate - social workers should preserve families and the justice system should

investigate abuse and supervise those who have transgressed societal norms.

Payne (1991) argued that social work has several common features that, if present in an encounter, define it as a social work encounter. These features may be present in different combinations and different theories may emphasise some aspects more than others.

- The focus is on treating people as individuals, not categories. While clients may have common needs or while their difficulties may reflect social trends, social work activities are designed to respond individually to each person. Individualisation is a feature of social work even when groups or communities are the client and social workers are concerned with enabling individuals to participate fully in group and community efforts.
- Psychological and social knowledge, evidence and argument help social workers to understand their clients and their actions, and thus to respond to them individually. Social workers draw on a wide range of theories to help them understand their clients and the context in which they live.
- Helping in social work operates through relationships with people. Research has indicated that empathy, warmth, respect and genuineness are key elements of a successful social work relationship
- Social work takes place within an organisational context and it is the organisational context that usually defines focus and purpose of social work activity within it.
- Social work responds to defined needs. The concept "need" is a complex one. Payne (1991) explained that needs may be defined as something within us (hunger) which drives us to achieve some purpose (food) or needs may be socially defined as being something that is good for us (good health care).
- Social work is concerned with the maintenance of important social

structures, such as the family and the community.

- Social work advocates for clients, both in the sense of arguing the client's case for the provision of resources but also in seeking to help the client establish or re-establish acceptability and participation in society.

While the features elucidated by Payne (1991) might reflect the standard and generally accepted "goodness of fit" approach to social work practice, they fall within a conservative-liberal continuum. They lack a radical orientation in that they presume a hierarchical relationship between the client and social worker, and view the social worker as an "expert" who "advocates for" clients. Furthermore, they do not call for any fundamental societal change.

More recently, the International Federation of Social Workers adopted a definition of social work that reaffirms social work's mission to enable all people to develop their full potential, enrich their lives and prevent dysfunction. It also recognises the range of activities and methods that social workers adopt in practice. In contrast to the definition provided at the beginning of the chapter, the definition reflects social work's growing concern with social justice and a move away from an emphasis on social control. The definition reads as follows:

The social work profession promotes social change, problem solving in human relationships and the empowerment and liberation of people to enhance well-being. Utilising theories of human behaviour and social systems, social work intervenes at the points where people interact with their environments. Principles of human rights and social justice are fundamental to social work. (IFSW, 29.6.2001)

This definition of social work brings this discussion of the development of

social work in the western world to a close. The roots of social work were examined and the discussion illustrated how social work has been shaped by what was happening in society at the time. In the next section, how the western definition of social work impacted on the growth of social work in South Africa is examined.

THE SOUTH AFRICAN EXPERIENCE

Social work in South Africa has very closely followed the western model of social work with one important distinction - the effect of apartheid that still impacts on social work in South Africa. This section outlines the emergence of social work in South Africa and examines the ways in which social work has come to be constructed in South Africa. Particular attention is paid to the way in which apartheid influenced social welfare policy and thus the way in which social work came to be practised in South Africa and the problems caused by the subsequent dismantling of this system.

The emergence of social work in South Africa

Within traditional African society, the immediate and extended family had an important role to play in dealing with social needs and social problems (Rwomire and Radithokwa, 1996; Patel, 1992). Mutual support, co-operation and communalism were important aspects of this society in pre-colonial times. Colonisation, firstly by the Dutch and then by the English, disrupted these indigenous support systems. Local communities had to adapt their technology, modes of production and social, cultural, political and welfare systems to the meet the demands of the colonial power and to support their economic interests. The worldview that whites were superior to blacks laid the foundations for a welfare system that would be discriminatory and unfair.

Colonisation began the process of breaking down traditional forms of family and community life and this was exacerbated by industrialisation that began with the discovery of gold and diamonds in the mid 19th century. The mining industry required a large work force and thousands of black labourers were recruited to work on the mines. Black workers who were employed on the mines lived on compounds and were not permitted to bring their families with them – a further factor that contributed to the destruction of traditional forms of family support. The effects that this had on housing and land issues is further discussed in the following chapter when the origins and growth of informal settlements are examined. Suffice at this point to say that the system of migrant labour which ensured maximum profits for the mining industry also influenced the system of welfare that developed. Migrant workers, because they were considered to be temporary residents in the urban areas, were not included in the provision of welfare services.

Industrialisation and urbanisation also impacted on the white community and two women's organisations developed in order to meet the needs of poor white people – child welfare societies were established in Cape Town and Johannesburg respectively in 1908 and 1909 (Patel, 1994). As more and more Afrikaans speaking whites felt the pressures of industrialisation and the competitive labour market, the Poor White problem became increasingly evident (Loffel, 2000). In 1929, the Carnegie Commission into the Poor White Problem was established and it published its report in 1932. One of the main recommendations arising from the commission was that a state department of welfare be established. This happened in 1934. The Commission also called for thoroughly trained social workers leading to the first training programmes for social workers in South Africa and placing welfare functions firmly in the hands of social workers.

Social work under apartheid

The Nationalist party came into power in 1948 and the Afrikaner worldview dominated political, economic and social power for the next 50 years. Social work, while retaining much of its western influence, developed in a very distinct way under apartheid. Apartheid had a profound impact on social work practice in South Africa, the effects of which are still being experienced today in the legacy of unequal distribution of resources and racist attitudes. Apartheid was based on the assumption that different racial groups form different cultures each of which needed to be protected. This could be best achieved, it was argued, by the separation of the races and a plethora of legislation ensured that this was carried out. Examples of these Acts were:

- The Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act of 1949 and the Immorality Act of 1957 which prohibited sexual contact between people of different races
- The Population Registration Act of 1950 which provided for the registration of people according to their race
- The Promotion of Black Self Government Act of 1959 and the National States Citizenship Act of 1970 which set aside land for self governing black states and deprived Black South Africans of their South African citizenship
- The Group Areas Act, 1950, and as amended, 1966 which identified specific areas where different races could reside and which led to forced removals and the re -settlement of millions of people of colour

This legislation created the climate in which prejudice and stereotypes flourished and social work, which had been mainly controlled by whites, was easily influenced by the policies of the day. Social work practice under apartheid was marked by **separateness** and **exclusion**. As mentioned above, the Population Registration Act of 1950 classified the population of South Africa into racial categories that determined access to all manner of services,

including social welfare services and social benefits. Racially divided government departments were set up to provide services to specific racial groups. Proponents of this system argued that separate did not mean unequal and that each racial group had specific cultural, linguistic and religious aspects that could best be catered for by separate departments. Opponents on the other hand, argued that while cultural sensitivity was important, the system was unequal, discriminatory and wasteful of resources (McKendrick, 1987). At the height of apartheid madness, 19 Government departments of welfare existed. These were:

- Department of National Health and Population Development, which played a co-ordinating role, effectively keeping power in white hands
- Three "own affairs" welfare departments (House of Assembly which dealt with Whites, House of Delegates which dealt with Indians and House of Representatives which dealt with Coloureds)
- Four provincial welfare departments serving Blacks,
- Four departments within the "independent" homeland states (Transkei, Ciskei, Venda and Bophututswana)
- Six welfare departments within the non- independent homeland states within South Africa
- Department of Development Aid, which played a co-ordinating function with regard to the services in the homelands

Not only were government departments expected to provide services based on race, but non-governmental welfare organisations were also required to implement this policy. A two and a half page policy document, Circular 29 of 1966, issued by the Department of Social Welfare and Pensions reminded welfare organisations that each population group should serve its own community. Non-racial welfare organisations and having representatives of different races at committee meetings was contrary to this policy. The justification for this racial separation was couched in terms that implied this

policy was in the best interests of all the parties. Meetings of white committees, it was said, usually occur in white areas, where "non whites do not normally go" and having "non whites" at these venues would give rise to "talk, criticism and friction". Awkwardness was likely to arise at social occasions such as tea breaks and meals. A patronising attitude to "non-whites" was also evident in the document. It claimed that where "non-whites" were in a minority in a meeting they were overshadowed and unable to make an effective contribution. "Non-white" welfare organisations were to be given the opportunity to develop alongside their white counterparts so that they "could have the benefit of white guidance and advice" and would in time "advance to a level of complete independence where they will be quite capable of managing their own affairs". This document had a powerful effect on the organisation of voluntary social welfare services in South Africa - because many welfare organisations were dependent on government funding (and, no doubt, in some cases agreed with the policy) they complied with the requirements to a greater or lesser extent. Some split their services along racial lines in order to survive, while others set up different committees to serve the different races but never actually split into independent bodies.

Any effort by those within the welfare sector to act fairly in respect of services to different people was seen as unpatriotic and several years later, Circular 65 of 1978 reinforced the notion of separateness by warning those in the welfare sector "not to mix social work and politics".

Not only were services separate, but also they were also **discriminatory** and whites benefited disproportionately. In 1984/85, for example, whites who made up 19% of the population received 45% of the welfare budget, whereas Africans who made up 65% of the population received 21% (quoted in McKendrick, 1987). There were also more white social workers (68%) than African (16%).

Social work also operated under a **residual model of social welfare**. The state accepted some, but not primary responsibility for helping people in need.

As opposed to an institutional model of welfare, where welfare is seen a right for all people, the residual model asserts that the responsibility for peoples' social security rest with people themselves and with their families and communities. Only if people are unable to cope, does the state come into play. The independence and self-reliance of the individual, family and community is seen as paramount and to be protected and maintained. This was seen to be in keeping with the rugged, individualist tradition of the Afrikaner (Brumer in McKendrick, 1987). This tradition had seen the early Dutch settlers with their strong Calvinist outlook resisting English rule, and moving away from areas under British rule and settling in the interior of the country. Further attempts by the British to colonise these inland areas of South Africa (and to gain access to the gold-fields) led to the Anglo Boer of 1899 and eventually to the Union of South Africa, which was established in 1910.

In social work practice, this tradition translated into an emphasis on individualism and individual pathology. International trends, as seen in the preceding section, also emphasised the individual perspective and casework was seen as the main method of social work. The effect of these policies on social work practice was that most social work activity tended to be therapeutic and remedial in nature and aimed at social control. A large degree of statutory work was undertaken by social workers (Gray, 1998). Social work organisations, which were to a large extent dependent on the state for subsidies, were forced to comply with state policy. Subsidies were worked out on the basis of numbers of cases thus discouraging group work and community work projects.

Towards a new welfare system

Concerns about this system led to the growth of an alternate welfare system

that was opposed to the formal welfare system. During the apartheid years, non- governmental organisations and church sponsored projects provided a wide range of services in the form of advice offices, support services for political detainees and victims of violence, children's groups, and income generating projects (Gray, 1998; Louw, 1991; Patel, 1992). Social workers were employed in these organisations but they usually were not registered in terms of existing legislation because of their opposition to apartheid and social work practice in these organisations was seldom called social work. One of the main aims of these alternate welfare organisations was to develop models of intervention that would be appropriate in a post -apartheid South Africa (Patel, 1994). Social workers thus worked as part of a team with other professionals, there was an emphasis on advocacy and empowerment and the approach adopted was generally developmentally oriented.

At the same time, questions were being raised concerning the relevance of western models of social work for developing countries where the major problems are associated with poverty. In many parts of Africa, social work had simply not taken hold (Payne, 1998). Various reasons have been postulated for this. Among these are the colonial heritage and the lack of goodness of fit between models of social work and needs of people. This is because there is a failure to take a holistic view of the human condition, including political considerations, a break down and a non-acceptance of traditional structures, and an emphasis on economic expediency (Asamoah and Beverley, 1988). Similarly, Midgely (1993) suggested that a narrow conceptualisation of social work with its emphasis on the individual, the lack the necessary resources and culturally irrelevant and restricted curricula of university training for social workers had limited the growth of social work in African countries. The individualist approach was also criticised by Silavwe (1995) who pointed out that in the western tradition, self-determination and confidentiality are held to be two essential values. In traditional African society this is not so. There is a

greater emphasis on community and group determination. He added that individuality and a disproportionate amount of initiative and self-determination might lead to suspicion and jealousy. Likewise, the question of confidentiality is problematic in traditional societies where problem-solving mechanisms are built into family and community structures. In the South African context, McKendrick (1988, in Patel, 1992) pointed out that the largely urban based, specialised and curative nature of social work services did not meet the needs of the vast majority of the population and were oriented towards social control and helping people adapt to an unjust system.

In the years before the release of Nelson Mandela in 1990 and the first democratic elections in 1994, there were increasing calls for social work to respond more appropriately to the needs of the country. The scope of poverty in South Africa was highlighted in the Second Carnegie Inquiry into Poverty in 1984 and the need for social work to respond to poverty and not just the effects of poverty was highlighted by several South African writers (Louw, 1991, McKendrick, 1991). In 1990, McKendrick called on social work in South Africa to return to the professions' roots which were a concern for the people who had been disadvantaged by societal development and change.

Social work in post-apartheid South Africa: Policy guidelines

In July 1994, only three months after South Africa's first democratic election, a single department of welfare was formed. In searching for an appropriate response to social problems in South Africa, policy makers consulted widely within the welfare and related sectors. The outcome was a paradigm shift from an essentially residual model of welfare to a social development approach to welfare.

Contemporary South African social welfare policy is outlined in the White Paper on Social Welfare (1997). The challenge of welfare, according to the

preamble of this White Paper (1997:7), is to "devise appropriate strategies to address the alienation and the economic and social marginalisation of vast sectors of the population". Social welfare is described as "an integrated system of social services, facilities, programmes and social security to promote social development, social justice and the social functioning of people" (White Paper, 1997:15). Although there is a commitment to retain existing services, a strong commitment to social development framework for welfare is thus evident.

While the White Paper proposes that social welfare services should be available to all South Africans, it makes special mention of those who should receive priority. The aim of the new social welfare policy is to "facilitate the provision of appropriate developmental social welfare services to all South Africans, especially those living in poverty, those who are vulnerable and those who have special needs" (White Paper for Social Welfare, 1997: 16). There is a particular emphasis on welfare as a means of poverty alleviation.

The following table summarises the principles encapsulated in the White Paper which guide the provision of welfare services and programmes and within which social workers are expected to operate.

Table 4: Principles of developmental social welfare

PRINCIPLE	EXPLANATION
Securing basic welfare rights	Social security for all and social assistance for those unable to support themselves and their dependents
Equity	Resources should be equitably distributed and should address inequalities
Non- Discrimination.	Programmes should not exclude people based on gender, age, sexual orientation, disability and illness.
Improved quality of life	The welfare system should lead to an improved quality of life, especially for the disadvantaged, the vulnerable and those who have special needs.
Democracy	Public participation in decision making and management of welfare services is important
Human rights	Welfare policies should be sensitive to human rights as enshrined in the constitution of the Republic of South Africa
People centred policies	Just and people- centred policies need to replace the policies of the past
Investment in human capital	Focus is to be placed on the social development of individuals, families and communities.
Sustainability	Welfare programmes need to be financially viable, cost efficient and effective.
Intersectoral collaboration and partnership	Civil society, private sector and government need to work together.
Decentralisation of service delivery, accessibility and appropriateness	Welfare should be devolved to local government level and services must be co-ordinated, accessible and responsive to local needs
Quality services	Services should strive for excellence and quality
Transparency and accountability	Organisations and institutions should be accountable and transparent at all levels
"Ubuntu":	The principle of caring for each other's well being should underlie all welfare programmes.

Social work within a social development approach

In order to understand the paradigm shift demanded by the White Paper for Social Welfare (1997), it is necessary to understand where the term "development" has come from and how its meaning has been influenced by events in society. During what has now come to be known as the first development decade (the 1960s), western governments opted for a capitalist model of development (Roodt, 1996). Simply put, it was believed that pre-industrialised, under developed, and poor countries could move through a number of stages to become mature industrialised societies with the help of investments in urban industrial programmes. The benefits of this in the form of increased prosperity and improved living conditions would then "trickle down" to those sectors that were underdeveloped. However, it became increasingly clear that this theory was flawed. Economic growth did not automatically impact positively on peoples' lives. The assumption that development was a linear process proved simplistic and incorrect. In addition, this view of development did not take into account structural aspects such as the status of women, the caste system, and issues related to access to land, all of which would need to change in order for development to be successful (Elliott, 1993).

From these beginnings, the notion of social development, with an emphasis on social justice and human rights began to emerge. Midgely (1995:25) defined social development as a "process of planned social change designed to promote the well being of the population as a whole in conjunction with a dynamic process of economic development". Writing in the South African context, Gray (1996) described social development as:

- committed to eradication of poverty
- recognising the link between welfare and economic development,
- encouraging investment in human capital rather than a drain on limited resources
- including non -remedial forms of intervention

A number of writers have pointed to the commonalities between social work and social development. Paiva (1977) reminded readers that social work has always attempted to look at the whole person and has tried to integrate all that was needed for successful functioning. Based on this, social work therefore had much in common with social development. Omer (1979) also believed that social work and social development had much in common. Elliot (1993) argued that the values of social development such as human dignity, social justice and participatory democracy were consistent with social work values and proposed a model for social work practice that combined social development theory and general systems theory.

Just how social workers could operationalise social development in practice has proved challenging and as Elliot (1993), pointed out, social development is a somewhat illusive concept and difficult to operationalise. Some writers such as Paiva (1977), writing within an individualist tradition, have suggested that improving the functioning of individuals to work to better themselves would lead to social betterment and the growth of a more caring society. Other writers such as Hollister (1977) have approached it from a macro practice tradition and advocated social work methods such as community organisation, social planning and administration as ways of operationalising social development.

More recent attempts to operationalise social development have adopted an inclusive micro-macro perspective and have suggested that social workers intervene at different levels to promote social development. The following table summarises this approach.

Table 5: A micro-macro perspective of social development

LEVEL	METHODS
International	World building - Promotion of internationally guaranteed human rights and social justice through participation in international forums and conferences
National	Nation building - Integration of a nations social, political, economic and cultural institutions through policy formulation, political empowerment and social provision.
Regional	Region building - Integration of a region's social, political, economic and cultural institutions through policy formulation, political empowerment and social provision.
Local	Community building - Building communities through community development, community action and the establishment of co-operatives
Organisational	Institutional building - Building organisations and institutions through humanising existing organisations, and establishing new ones to respond to new needs.
Individual/ family	Individual and group empowerment – Helping individuals cope better with their lives through individual and group remedial interventions, empowerment and conscientisation strategies, self help and mutual aid.

(Adapted from Elliot, 1993; Estes, 1993; Lombard, 1999)

According to Elliot (1993), the processes involved, no matter the method, include assessment, analysis, goal setting and planning, implementation, evaluation and withdrawal. For each of these processes, three sets of skills are important:

- Analysis skills such as the development of connections, the transfer of learning, policy analysis, assessment and evaluation
- Communication skills such as co-ordinating, facilitating and conscientising
- Action related skills such as planning, goal setting, negotiation,

empowerment, catalysing, advocacy, and conflict management

Social workers, with their holistic understanding of the human condition and its interconnectedness with the environment and with their experience of working with people, are ideally placed to be able to function within a social development framework.

The present situation: Social work under threat

Throughout its history, questions about social work's relevance and ability to adapt to changing circumstances and to offer relevant services have been asked. Hollander, (1937) wrote "social work is suffering from hardening of the arteries, creeping paralysis, premature senility, heart failure (especially heart failure), sleeping sickness – almost everything except growing pains" (I do not know the origin of this quote. I recorded it as an undergraduate student in the 1970s in my "Book of Quotes" but did not record the reference). Another example is the title of a book by Brewer and Lait (1980), "Can social work survive?"

Social work has never been considered to be a prestigious profession and public perceptions regarding the profession have often tended to be quite negative.) Brieland (1990) suggested that this could be due to social work's focus on the poor and needy while Goldstein (1998) pointed out that the public has difficulty in understanding what social workers do. Rwomire and Raditlokwa (1996) suggested that social work had low credibility because of a lack of government support and a lack of resources.

In South Africa, these trends have been exacerbated by developments that are peculiar to South Africa and social work in South Africa is at present facing a "crisis of confidence" (McKendrick, 2001:105). Much of this has to do with the past and the "baggage" that social work has brought with it into the new South

Africa. As already illustrated in this chapter, social work in apartheid South Africa came to be closely associated with apartheid ideals. Social work services were divided along racial lines with the major beneficiaries of services and resources being white people. Casework was the predominant method of social work and limited attention was given to the needs of the majority, that is, poor black people. In the first Government of National Unity, welfare was a National Party portfolio thus further creating a negative impression of welfare.

The White Paper for Social Welfare (1997) criticised social workers and suggested that social work courses did not equip graduates to respond appropriately to developmental needs. It also stated that there was too much dependence on social work and that other categories of personnel, such as development workers and child and youth care workers, ought to be promoted.

The end result of this has been the replacement of the previous South African Council for Social work with the South African Council for Social Service Professions. This statutory body regulates the registration of social workers, and through its code of conduct ensures the professional conduct of social workers.

It is envisaged that this Council will eventually serve as an umbrella body for the social service professions, all of which have their own professional boards and which will protect and promote their interests. New categories of social service professions at present include child and youth care workers, community development workers and probation officers.

There is a perception that social workers have been marginalised within the welfare sector (Gray, 2000, Coughlan, 2000) and in particular, the establishment of the category child and youth care workers, has caused concern for social workers. The background to this is as follows. Concern regarding shortcomings in the child and youth care system in South Africa led

to the establishment of the Inter-Ministerial Committee for Youth at Risk (known as the IMC). The lack of trained personnel in residential child care facilities, concern that children were being removed from their families too easily and remaining in the welfare system for too long, and the lack of facilities for black children (as a result of apartheid policies) were identified as problems. The purpose of the committee was to formulate "an integrated framework for services for the child and youth care system that emphasises prevention and early intervention and minimises residential care" (IMC 1996:3).

Few social workers would object to the ideals of the IMC but of concern was the extent to which social work was blamed for problems in this field. Rather than focus on the context which led to overloaded, underpaid social workers working in an under-resourced welfare system, the IMC accused social workers of being inadequately trained to do child and youth care work and of limiting themselves to clinical or therapeutic intervention roles (Gray and Sewpaul, 1998). The leadership of the National Association for Child Care Workers played an important role within the IMC and lobbied vigorously for the professional recognition of child and youth care as a profession. Many of the tasks said to be the domain of child and youth care workers, such as counselling children and families, and conducting a range of preventive, educative and therapeutic groups, are already tasks that social workers are competent to undertake.

The ability of social workers to effectively embrace the principles of the White Paper for Social Welfare and to operationalise these in practice, has also been threatened by the adoption of GEAR (as mentioned in Chapter One) as the dominant economic framework for South Africa. This neo-liberal economic policy is contradictory to a social developmental welfare policy that advocates a "people centred approach to sustainable development, within a supportive and enabling socio-political and economic environment" (Sewpaul, 2001:315).

GEAR has clearly influenced the proposed Financing Policy that was released by the Department of Welfare in 1999. While claiming to provide the mechanisms for implementing the provisions of the White Paper for Social Welfare (1997), the policy document proposes that Government "purchase" rather than "fund" welfare services. The language and intent of the document, with words such as contracts, tenders, measurable outputs, efficiency, monitoring, out-sourcing, venture financing, business plans, control and sanctions, accord with market-based and managerial-based discourses in social work which is contradictory to a social development paradigm adopted in South Africa.

A further concern for social workers has been the change in name of the Department of Welfare to the Department of Social Development. Social development is an abstract concept. It reflects a philosophical and policy framework from which practice skills and values may emanate, and as such should underscore all sectors of government. The change of name from welfare to social development minimises the place of welfare in our national context reflecting the paradoxes and contradictions inherent in the various policy documents. If South Africa is serious about people-centred development, welfare ought to remain at the centre of its development policies, for as Kader Asmal (1995:2) asserted:

The social welfare policy of a country is where the real heart of the country can be assessed. If the constitution is the head, social welfare is the heart. It is by looking into the social welfare policy of a country that you can assess whether a nation is putting its money where its mouth is.

Social work appears to have had difficulty in responding strongly to what appears to be this process of marginalisation and a weakening of the

profession. One of the reasons for this is the fragmentation of social work professional associations and the fact that social workers are poorly organised and unable to speak with one voice. That this is the case, also has its history in the country's apartheid past. The first professional association, the South African Black Social Workers Association (SABSWA), was formed in 1945. It was created to "act as a mouth piece of black social workers, to make representations to the government or any other official or body on any matter concerning social welfare in black communities, and to ensure that black social workers maintain a high standard of conduct and integrity in accordance with the code of ethics" (Mazibuko, 1998). This association also established a bursary scheme for black social workers and encouraged continuing education by organising international exchange programmes.

A second professional association was formed in 1951 - the Social Worker's Association of South Africa (SWASA). This association was for white social workers (mainly Afrikaans speaking) and focussed primarily on the professional concerns of its members (Mazibuko, 1998). In 1980, an "open" association was formed, the Society for Social Work (SSW). This association was open to anyone and tended to focus on educational programmes and professional enrichment activities (Mazibuko, 1998).

Several attempts have been made to bring about a unified professional body. In 1983, the Liaison Committee for Professional Associations was formed. One of its major goals was to work for better salaries for social workers but this body did not receive the wholehearted support of the professional associations. The Interim Committee of Social Work Associations (ICSWA) was formed in 1997 with the initial objective of facilitating interaction among social work associations to establish a national organisation. Widespread consultation in KwaZulu Natal indicated that most social workers preferred a unified, non racial professional association. However, there are deep -seated

ideological differences across the associations and key decision makers are reluctant to disengage from their traditional homes and propose instead an umbrella body to which each of the previously racially fragmented professional bodies would affiliate. As a result of ICSWA processes, the SSW was disbanded and a new initiative, the KwaZulu Natal Social Workers Association was formed in 1999. The future direction of professional associations and whether social workers in South Africa will be able to provide a united front in the face of the challenges facing the profession remains unclear.

CONCLUSION

Contemporary social work, as it is constructed by social workers and residents of informal settlements, is influenced by the complex history of social work which has been examined in this chapter. In particular, this chapter has examined the contradictory nature of social work, the paradigm shifts that have occurred in recent years and current threats to contemporary social work in South Africa.

Chapter Four provides an introduction to informal settlements and provides an overview of conditions in informal settlements.


CHAPTER FOUR

INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS: AN OVERVIEW

Social workers have long been aware that the behaviour of people and the problems they experience is intimately related to the environment in which they find themselves. The notion of “person-in-environment” as a guiding framework for understanding human behaviour has come to be, as discussed in Chapter Three, an integral part of social work practice. The concept “environment”, however, is a complex one and its definition largely subjective. Environment is generally taken to encompass both the physical (the natural and built world) and the social (the network of human relationships) environment.

This chapter focuses specifically on one part of the environment, the “built environment”, in which residents of informal settlements live. “Built environment” refers to the structural context in which people find themselves (Naidoo, 1999). An ideal and responsive built environment would ensure a balance between developed and open spaces, the provision of resources and amenities, and the aesthetic design of living units within close proximity to schools, hospitals, clinics, shops and sporting and cultural facilities. The natural environment would also be protected. Such an environment would facilitate the effective social functioning of people.

Informal settlements do not provide an ideal built environment. Life in informal settlements, for many residents, is characterised by poverty, poor housing, overcrowding, lack of basic physical facilities and resources, and violence and conflict. This chapter focuses on understanding the life world of people who live in informal settlements. This is essential for the purposes of this study because it will provide the background against which to understand what social workers do in informal settlements, and their construction of their experiences



of social work in informal settlements. It also provides the context for understanding what residents of informal settlements see as their main challenges and their construction of what social workers should be doing.

The chapter begins with a discussion of the nature of informal settlements. This includes an analysis of the origins and growth of informal settlements and responses to this phenomenon. While the focus is on informal settlements in South Africa, international literature reveals many similarities in informal settlements world-wide and some of this literature is referred to when appropriate.

The chapter then goes on to examine life in informal settlements and discusses socio-economic aspects, housing, provision of services, educational, recreational and health resources and finally, conflict and violence. Important to note is that while many similarities exist between informal settlements, each informal settlement is also a unique system.

Finally, the chapter reviews South African literature in respect of social work practice in informal settlements.

THE NATURE OF INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS IN SOUTH AFRICA

This section examines the origins and growth of informal settlements and the responses to these.

Origins and growth of informal settlements

The public perception of how informal settlements originate is summed up in the following newspaper headline:

"A human flood drowns Gauteng.....One night there is vacant land; the next morning there are hundreds of home made shacks" (Electronic Mail and Guardian, 18.05.1997).

If this is to be believed, informal settlements are established suddenly and uncontrollably. Within 12 hours a whole province (Gauteng) is "flooded" with a mass of human beings. It happens stealthily under the cover of darkness. The reality is far more complex. Informal settlements have come into being and continue to expand because of a complex set of inter-related political, economic and social factors. Each of these factors is now discussed.

POLITICAL FACTORS

The history of informal settlements in South Africa is inextricably linked with the country's political goals. Both pre-apartheid and apartheid policy had, as its goal, the "separate development" of people. These policies, in turn, produced very distinctive urban forms, and town planning had racial separation as its major objective. Urban areas were seen as the domain of the politically dominant White minority while the African majority were seen as rural outsiders with only limited and highly regulated access to urban areas (Pillay, 1994). Influenced by the Stallard Commission (1921), official policy as it came to be implemented, permitted African people in urban areas only as long as their presence was "demanded by the wants of the White population" (Swilling, in McKendrick, 1993). Legislation effectively prevented African people from acquiring land and homes, especially in urban areas. The following table summarises those Acts that impacted on the availability of land and houses for

African people in South Africa.

Table 6: Summary of Acts of Parliament that impacted on availability of land and housing for African people

ACT	EFFECT
The Land Act, 1913	Prevented African people from owning property except in small portions of land set aside in what was to become the homelands
Native Urban Areas Act, 1923	As above
Native (Urban) Areas Consolidation Act, 1945	Restricted the movement of African people from rural to urban areas and made provision for the removal of people from certain areas.
Group Areas Act, 1950 (and amended in 1966) Group Areas Development Act, 1955	Zoned residential neighbourhoods along racial lines further restricting the access of Africans to land in urban areas and leading to the forced removals and re- settlements of millions of people of colour
Black Self Government Act, 1959 National States Citizenship Act, 1970	Set aside land for self governing black states (which became known as homelands or bantustans) and deprived Black South Africans of the South African citizenship
Proclamation 293 of 1979	Governed housing in African townships and required proof of long and stable residence in the area before allocating housing.

Despite these official attempts to restrict African people to rural areas, urbanisation was inevitable. Mabin (1992) pointed out that rural-urban migration had been taking place in South Africa since colonial times - economic activities associated with gold and diamond mining provided jobs for many African people and they were, in fact, aggressively recruited for these jobs. Urbanisation was therefore not a new phenomenon. However, increasing numbers of Africans sought better opportunities in the urban areas for a number of reasons. The rationalisation of labour and mechanisation on white

owned farms leading to job losses was one of these (Crankshaw and Hart, 1990). Droughts and the decreasing ability of the rural areas that were set aside for African occupation to support food production activities led to increasing poverty in these areas and provided a further impetus for the move to urban areas.

Not only did Government severely restrict access to land but also directly contributed to a severe housing shortage by its housing policies. According to Crankshaw and Hart (1990), expenditure on black housing decreased by 80 percent in the late 1960s. This was followed by a moratorium on urban housing for African people in the 1970s (McKendrick, 1993). Government made no provision for urban housing because of the policy that Africans should not be in the urban areas but in the homelands. A policy of privatisation in the 1980s further impacted on the availability of housing for Africans. The State withdrew from the provision of housing for Africans, concentrating their efforts on provision of serviced sites. Land was sold to private developers who developed sites and then sold these at a profit. This resulted in land and housing being available only to those who could afford it. This market was soon saturated and developers began to target the lower end of the market. This time co-incided with rent and loan repayment boycotts which were a feature of opposition politics in apartheid South Africa, causing financial losses to developers and finance companies, and resulted in many withdrawing from this market (De Minnaar, 1992).

In the absence of any alternatives to acquiring land and housing legally, it was inevitable that land invasions would take place and that informal settlements would result. From the 1930s, informal settlements on the outskirts of many towns and cities were common (Mabin, 1992), but the major proliferation of

such settlements took place from the 1980s onwards. Apartheid policies therefore never fully succeeded in keeping African people out of the urban areas. The very visible increase in the number of informal settlements in the mid 1980s, however, led to the popular belief that it was the dismantling of apartheid, and specifically, the abolition of Influx control in 1986, that encouraged a massive movement of people from the rural to urban areas. Research has shown that this was not entirely true and that many settlers in informal settlements were not new arrivals from rural areas but were urban dwellers from overcrowded townships (Crankshaw and Hart, 1990; Howe, 1984).

*Urban
about*

A further political factor which influenced the growth of informal settlements during this period was the administrative vacuum that was created by the abolition of the Administration Boards, which had controlled the movement of African people and housing in the township areas. Control passed to the provincial administration but there was no clear policy on how to respond to informal settlements. The uncontrolled growth of informal settlements was thus facilitated (Crankshaw and Hart, 1990).

ECONOMIC FACTORS

Several studies have illustrated the role played by economic factors in the growth of informal settlements. For example, writing about Phola Park in Gauteng, Adler (1994) pointed out that economic motives were the primary cause of people moving into this informal settlement. Many of these residents had been renting backyard shacks in the neighbouring townships but found the increasing costs prohibitive. Residents of Canaan in the Durban area, said they had moved closer to the Indian neighbourhoods where there would be a better chance of getting work as domestic workers. Canaan, situated near a

rubbish dump, also attracted settlers who could collect and sell cardboard from the dump and thus make a living not available to them in the township (Annecke, 1992). Cato Crest, an informal settlement within 5 kilometers of the Durban city centre, also attracted residents because of better access to employment opportunities (Makhathini, 1994).

This need to move closer to employment opportunities must also be seen in the context of the political upheavals of the 1980s. The increasingly violent opposition by the United Democratic Front (an alliance of extra-parliamentary oppositions organisations) to the apartheid government resulted in boycotts and "stay aways" which were enforced by road blocks and intimidation and the burning of busses and taxis, particularly in the township areas. While sympathising with the sentiments of the Mass Democratic Movement, many people sought accommodation in areas closer to their employment as the only option of securing their livelihood (Masinga, 1994).

See Huch, 5th

SOCIAL FACTORS

A number of social factors also contributed to the growth of informal settlements. Unpleasant, overcrowded living conditions in the townships, conflicts with neighbours and little prospect of improved conditions led to people setting up their own homes in nearby informal settlements (Crankshaw and Hart, 1990). There is also some evidence to suggest that migrant labourers who had been housed in single sex hostels left these hostels to establish homes with families in the informal settlements (Howe, 1984).

Reference has already been made to the violence of the 1980s and its effects of people moving closer to employment opportunities. Additionally, violence has been responsible for a considerable amount of movement of people. Fifty-

two percent of the respondents in Masinga's 1994 study of the causes of land invasions in the Durban area maintained that violence was the main cause. This seems to have been born out in other empirical studies that indicate that large numbers of people move within and between informal settlements due to violence (Cross, Bekker, and Clark, 1994.).

The movement of people due to violence was not restricted to KwaZulu Natal. Writing about the growth of informal settlements in the Gauteng region, Crankshaw and Hart (1990) pointed out that refugees from the violence in Transvaal townships such as Soweto, Evaton and Sebokeng moved into informal areas.

Official responses to informal settlements

Responses to informal settlements have ranged from outright antagonism and punitive measures, to guarded acceptance and efforts to improve them. This section examines the responses of the authorities to squatters and informal settlements.

REMOVALS: A PUNITIVE RESPONSE

Most developing countries in the 1960s assumed that the public sector should and could provide low income housing for poor people (Pillay, 1994). This often took the form of high rise buildings that were built to high standards which required high monthly subsidies per unit to maintain. Supposed low income housing thus did not meet the needs of the very poor who were unable to afford the cost of keeping such a home. Market forces resulted in many people selling these homes to those who could afford them.

At the same time, informal settlements were becoming more visible. Housing in

these areas was seen as below the accepted standard and was often an illegal occupation of the land. This led to either total government neglect of the areas or more seriously, to demolitions and removals.

In the local context, South Africa's urban policy was directed at removing squatters and relocating them to the homelands. The Prevention of Illegal Squatting Act, No 52 of 1951 aimed in the first instance to prevent squatting. It made provision for the removal of squatters and the demolition of shacks by order of a magistrate. Squatters had to be given three days warning by means of a multilingual notice placed on the site of the impending application for removal. When it became evident that this policy had failed to stop the growth of squatter settlements, the Act was amended and even more stringent controls were set in place. In 1976, the amendment (No 92 of 1976) allowed removals to take place without a court order but seven days notice had to be given to the "owner" of the shack. A further amendment (No 72 of 1977) passed in the following year, denied squatters access to the courts to challenge removals and also removed the seven day warning period. At no stage were the authorities ever required to provide alternative accommodation - a squatter right commonly acknowledged by other countries (Howe, 1984).

A number of communities in South Africa suffered demolitions and removals. In 1997, 10 000 people were left homeless as their shacks in the Western Cape informal settlements of Modderdam Road were demolished. Later that same year, 20 000 people lost their homes in Unibel, also in the Western Cape. Attempts to demolish the now well known Crossroads settlement were met with resistance from the residents and the area became the site of clashes between police and residents - in 1985 at least 20 people were killed in the settlement in attempts to have them removed (Wilson and Ramphela, 1989).

The human suffering caused by removals was incalculable. In a case study provided by Welsh (1987), an old man described how he, his wife and children, his possessions and his pigs were loaded onto a truck very early one morning and moved to another area. Some of his furniture was broken and the pigs died. Some of his neighbours did not move quickly enough and their homes were demolished before they had taken out all their furniture. Feeling that he has failed in his role as the protector of his family, this old man wondered if he was even a man and said he had lost hope and had no reason for living.

In the early 1990s, the responses to new land invasions were varied. In the Durban region, for example, it appeared that the response was determined by the pressure put on the local authority by residents of the informal settlements and their politically powerful allies (Masinga, 1994). Where there was no effective community organisation, demolitions proceeded with no problem, for example, at the Candover, Cornfield and Howell Road informal settlements. In other areas, where there was vigorous and organised opposition to demolitions, such as in Bottlebrush and Briardene, residents were able to win the battle against evictions.

TOWARDS A NEW APPROACH TO HOUSING

Towards the end of the 1960s, a policy shift regarding housing began to occur in international circles. The scarcity of public resources meant that public housing was clearly not meeting the needs of the very poor. Housing policy therefore began to focus on alternate forms of housing for the poor and new ways of conceptualising housing became evident. Turner's (1976) writing in this regard was particularly influential. He suggested that housing should be viewed as a verb, rather than a noun, thus emphasising that housing was a process

rather than an end product. A house therefore should be viewed in terms of its value to the occupant rather than on its physical characteristics. He pointed out that a shack in certain circumstances may be more supportive to a low income family than a standard house. As peoples' needs change, so too, do their housing needs. These individual needs can never, according to Turner, be met unless the individuals concerned are involved in decisions about the type of housing they require. For this reason, large scale housing schemes are unlikely to benefit the poor. While Turner believed that much of the responsibility for meeting housing needs should come from the individuals concerned, he nonetheless believed that government had an important role to play in the provision of housing. Government should set the parameters for housing to ensure adequate planning and should create a climate in which housing can take place. Specifically, the creation of an adequate infrastructure such as roads, and sewage disposal plants should be the domain of government.

In line with this type of thinking, site- and- service schemes and the in-situ upgrading of informal housing became the preferred mode of dealing with informal housing areas. Site- and service schemes, explained Pillay (1994), are schemes in which governments provide serviced land and funding for construction costs while community associations screen applicants and distribute loans. Households then build their own homes through incremental development processes. In-situ settlement upgrading, on the other hand, recognises the rights of people to remain where they are and focuses on securing tenure of the land and the infrastructure necessary for development. These types of efforts are intended to result in informal settlements being incorporated into the mainstream of city life. Both of these types of schemes are to be found in the South African setting and are in keeping with present

policy.

Despite the enthusiasm that greeted these types of schemes (the World Bank supported these), international research in the 1980s began to reveal disappointment concerning the slow rate of consolidation of these settlements (Pillay, 1994). The reasons for this can be ascribed to a number of factors. Many of these factors are relevant to the South African context and are discussed below.

LAND LOCATION AND OWNERSHIP

The availability of land is a pre-requisite in any site and service housing scheme. Finding and acquiring land for new projects can be time consuming and costly. Van der Linden (1986) provided a number of examples from the international literature of authorities allocating land in remote locations that were far from the city. This land was cheaper to access but high transport costs and lack of job opportunities resulted in the recipients abandoning these schemes. An anecdotal story told by a social worker in Durban is similar. A female street trader who had been living on the streets in the city centre was offered land in a site and service scheme about 10km from the city centre that she initially accepted with great enthusiasm. Within a short while, she was back living on the street. Her reasons for this included: the distance from her trading point, the danger of losing her business if she did not get to her spot early enough in the morning, and the irregular and unreliable public transport which eroded her profits. Financially, it made more sense for her to remain on the streets.

With regard to in-situ-upgrading, several writers make the obvious point that people are unwilling to invest time and effort into upgrading their houses if the

issue of land tenure is not resolved (Boaden and Taylor, 1992; Pillay, 1994). Resolving land issues takes time and effort and is dependent on several factors. In some areas, for example, land is in the hands of tribal authorities who are unwilling to give up their power. An example, quoted in Boaden and Taylor (1992), concerns the Qadi tribal area in Inanda, Durban. This area is not densely settled and provides a logical growth point for the Inanda area. It is under the control of the tribal authorities and the traditional chief is the primary custodian of the land. It represents a power base as well as a source of economic power for the chief. Giving up the land for private ownership would mean giving up the power base. People living in this area are unable to access finances for any upgrading and thus limited development is able to take place.

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

The idea that communities should actively participate in development projects that affect them is firmly entrenched in both housing and welfare policy in South Africa. Summarising the arguments in favour of community participation in housing development projects, Marais and Krige (1997: 183) stated that:

community participation is essential to the effectiveness of projects, assists in cost recovery, leads to effective resource utilisation, ensures social and political control by the community and community leaders, helps community members develop skills related to the project (empowerment), and helps to ensure that the project is affordable. It furthermore ensures that that projects are developed according to the needs of the people involved. (Brackets original)

In South Africa, large development agencies, such as the Urban Foundation and the Independent Development Trust, have made community participation a

pre-requisite for housing development schemes. However, community participation is not a straight-forward matter. While communities may form a geographic whole, they do not always share a common vision for the community. Mathebula (1999) in her research found that community members in Bhambayi felt that community participation actually retarded the rate of delivery of services. Arguments and conflict about other community issues slowed down decision making. The arrest of the local government councillor on charges of public violence further exacerbated the situation.

Upgrading is also not in everyone's interests. The following examples illustrate this. Richmond Farm, in the Ntuzuma area, was settled through a process of allocation of land by the de facto leaders of the area. These so-called "war lords" provided protection for settlers and, in turn, they provided the personnel to form armies to protect the area. While development in the form of roads and similar projects is encouraged, securing private ownership of the land is problematic as this would erode the power base of the "war lords" (Boaden and Taylor, 1992).

Informal settlements are also known to provide refuge for those in the dagga and gun trade and the chaotic nature of some informal settlements provides cover for them. These people have a direct interest in the maintenance of the informal, unregulated nature of informal settlements and could be expected to disrupt attempts to formalise such areas (Adler, 1994).

POOR ADMINISTRATION AND LACK OF CAPACITY

Poor administration, cumbersome procedures, lengthy channels of communication and institutional constraints are some of the factors that impact on upgrading schemes. At a macro level, problems with bureaucracy, lack of

sufficiently trained personnel and insufficiently trained personnel all contribute to poor delivery. At a local level, site and service schemes, as well as in-situ upgrading schemes require the co-ordination of a number of role players, including development agencies and government authorities, and the active participation of the beneficiaries. There is thus ample scope for inter agency conflict which can impact on the delivery of services. The lack of capacity of community committees that are charged with co-ordinating services and acting as the "voice" of the community, also impacts on the delivery of services. Misunderstandings about financing and home ownership occur. For example, people may have already paid a landlord for their shack and then feel aggrieved when they are expected to pay again. Committee members who may themselves be such landlords then find themselves in a difficult position of having to explain how the financing works. Such concepts of financing and home ownership are sometimes difficult for people with little education to understand and community leaders often lack the capacity to explain these in detail. They may also be reluctant to give details because they may be wrong and this further slows decision-making processes (Boaden and Taylor, 1992). In Bhambayi, for example, a young single man sought assistance from the student unit because he had been told that he could only qualify for a housing subsidy if he listed his girlfriend as a co-applicant. While he was quite happy for his girlfriend to live with him, he did not want her owning the new house with him. The committee had not explained to him that single people without dependents were not eligible for the subsidy and that their suggestion was their way of trying to help him access a home (Personal experience in Bhambayi).

TECHNICAL ASPECTS

Local authorities have, in the past, required high building standards which have prohibited the building of homes out of cheaper material. Van der Linden

(1986) suggested that part of this was due to the authorities concerns with visual appearance and their unwillingness to be seen to be creating slums. He further questioned the extent to which the building and construction industry, in attempts to serve their own interests, influenced the determination of standards.

Despite calls for building standards to be relaxed to allow cheaper forms of housing to be built (De Minnaar, 1992), some writers have felt that it was a myth that innovative, cheap methods of building would make an impact on the provision of low cost housing (Boaden and Taylor, 1992). These methods, they asserted, rarely find their way into housing schemes because people want formal, brick and tile homes.

PROBLEMS WITH RELOCATION

The relocation of people into other housing schemes is also problematic, and in many cases, people refuse to move. In Canaan, which was on the western side of the N3 highway near Durban, moving the people became imperative because of the instability of the land. However, people were reluctant to move until they were sure that schools were readily accessible in the new area (Ardington, 1992).

Even with in- situ upgrading, relocation may be necessary to make way for laying of roads and pipes, and for heavy machinery to get to where it is needed. An example was found in Bhambayi, where a small number of people needed to be moved in order to free land for a road. People refused to move to a newly developed area as it was too far from Phoenix where many of them had jobs. Development was slowed while other alternatives had to be explored. In some cases, resettlement is successfully carried out and Marais and Krige (1997)

reported that residents of Freedom Square (Bloemfontein) who had to be moved co-operated because of good communication and clearly motivated reasons.

South African housing policy

In South Africa, arguments for housing reform and a fundamental change in the way of dealing with informal settlements only began to emerge in late 1980s and early 1990s as demands for political changes in the country became more vociferous. The Urban Foundation pointed out that a new housing policy needed to be framed with development in mind, rather than with the removal of squatters as its central premise (Urban Foundation, 1991). Hindson and McCarthy's book (1994), "Here to stay: Informal settlements in KwaZulu-Natal" proceeds from the assumption that informal settlements were a permanent feature of our landscape and that planning needed to acknowledge this.

In 1990, a task team was appointed by the government to investigate all aspects of housing and land reform with a view to the development of a national housing policy. Known as the De Loor Committee, the group submitted its report in 1992. One of its fundamental recommendations was that community participation should be integral to formulation of housing policy (Dewar, 1993). Simultaneously, many other changes were taking place in South Africa as the country moved towards a new democratically elected government. Apartheid laws such as the Population Registration Act (1950) were repealed and for the first time, all people were free to move and to set up home in any area they liked. Housing became an important issue during this transition period, with the ANC promising housing for all in its election campaign.

The Government of National Unity, which came into power after the first democratic elections in 1994, produced a White Paper entitled "A new housing policy and strategy for housing". This document acknowledged that housing the nation was one of the greatest challenges facing the new government and laid the blame for existing problems squarely at the door of the previous government – "problems emanate from the bureaucratic, administrative, financial and institutional frameworks inherited from the previous government" (White Paper for Housing, 1994:2).

This White Paper was a curious mix of the capitalist thinking of the previous government which provided housing at the most economic cost and the socialist thinking of the liberation movement, now the government. The key principles enunciated in the White paper were that housing was a right within a democratic country and that it was a means towards people-centred development. The importance of community participation in housing was seen to be essential. The delivery of services would take place within an economic policy that encouraged growth, increased employment, incentives to save and the containment of inflation. In addition, the White Paper for Housing (1994) made it clear that government was not a provider of housing but that its task was to create an enabling and conducive environment in which housing initiatives could take place.

The minimum complete house to which all South Africans should have access is described as a permanent residential structure with security of tenure, and which provides privacy and adequate protection against the elements, as well as potable water, adequate sanitary facilities, waste disposal and domestic electricity supply (White Paper for Housing, 1994). This is clearly a long term goal and Government acknowledges that it is the ideal to which we should

strive. To this end, Government provides first time home owners who have an income of less than R3500 with a subsidy of up to R16 000. The amount of the subsidy varies according to the monthly income of the household. To qualify for the subsidy, applicants have to be South African residents, they have to be married or living with a long term partner or if they are single, they must be over 21 and have dependents, and they must never have owned a home or received government assistance to buy a home in the past.

There are a number of different subsidies available. Project linked subsidies apply to housing projects that are initiated by development companies, communities and government agencies and it is these types of subsidies that have been most useful in the upgrading and improvements of informal settlements. Individual subsidies can be accessed by individual home owners who are not linked to any project. Consolidation subsidies are available to those people who previously received assistance from the previous government for site and service schemes. The fourth type of subsidy is an institutional subsidy which is given to an organisation to develop social housing which would provide rental options for specific groups of people with special needs, for example, the aged and the disabled.

While the policy provides a framework for development and the subsidy assistance to the poorest sector of society, a number of problems have been identified. The amount of money available for the subsidy is inadequate. This amount can only provide a small home - in some areas new units are only 10 square meters (Napier, 1997). A newspaper report in 1997 described the new homes being built as a "sorry affair" (Mail and Guardian, 13.10.1997). These matchbox houses were being referred to by local people as "*uvezanyawo*", a Sotho term which means "where your feet show" - a comment that the house

was so small that your feet stuck out the window when you slept! This minute house is hardly the home to which all South Africans are entitled and certainly cannot provide the privacy and space for a growing or extended family.

Part of the problem with project linked subsidies is that the amount of money available per person has to be used, not only to build the house, but to provide the infrastructure necessary. Marais and Krige, (1997) cited the example of Freedom Square in Bloemfontein where residents had to choose between a smaller site and more services or a larger site and less services. One of the factors to be taken into account here is whether people can afford payment for on-going services. Some writers point out that it is the obligations of continued monthly payments for services that make such schemes inaccessible to the poorest (Pillay, 1992; van der Linden, 1986). There is also some evidence to suggest that people prefer a larger site that provides a degree of privacy and the opportunity for expansion at a later stage (Napier, 1997). If people do opt for this route, plans should make provision for increased service provision - adequate space should be allowed for the laying of water pipes and for the connection of electricity at a later stage.

Government has also expressed concern that the subsidy is not benefiting those it was intended for. The Sunday Times reported in May 1999, that people from informal settlements who had received government subsidised homes, now worth R17 000 were selling them for as little as R3 000. Poor families, it appeared were selling their homes to get much needed capital and wealthier people, who bought the homes, were renting them out and making a profit. A government official was quoted as saying, "these people are defeating the object of the project, which is to provide shelter for the poor" (Sunday Times, 23.05.1999).

This section has drawn attention to the complex of factors that have influenced the establishment and development of informal settlements. It has examined how responses to informal settlements have moved from hostile and punitive responses to an acknowledgement that informal settlements are "here to stay". Housing policy and its implications for the development of informal settlements was also discussed. The following section reviews literature concerning life in informal settlements.

LIFE IN INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS

This section examines the conditions that exist in informal settlements and how these impact on peoples' lives. Issues relating to socio-economic conditions, housing, services, health, education, recreation and finally conflict and violence are explored.

Socio-economic aspects: An "average" informal settlement

Wilkens and Hofmeyer (1994) pointed out that it is difficult to define an "average" or "typical" informal settlement in socio-economic terms. Factors such as the history and age of the informal settlement, its location and density all contribute to the socio-economic profile of an area. In surveying the available studies, they provided the following summary of features of informal settlements in the greater Durban area. The highest proportion of marginalised (that is, no access to wages or remittances from formal sector and no access to welfare pensions) and welfare dependent (that is, no access to wages but access to welfare pensions only) people are found in the peri-urban informal settlements. Employment rates, according to Wilkens and Hofmeyer (1994)

varied from settlement to settlement but they suggested that more than a third of people in informal settlements were not in the labour force. Grant and Meiklejohn (1994) estimated that less than 50 percent of residents of informal settlements were in employment. This figure could, in fact, be much higher - more recent figures for SA as a whole showed a 56% unemployment rate for young females and 43% for young males (Wittenberg and Pearce, 1996).

On the basis of these findings, Wilkens and Hofmeyer (1994) suggested, that in terms of their socio-economic profile, informal settlements were situated mid way between rural settlements on the one hand and urban, formal settlements on the other hand. By 1998, however, a different picture appeared to be emerging. According to Cross, Mngadi and Mbhele (1998), unemployment rates in urban shack areas had risen to record heights and their research results indicated that people might be better off in smaller rural centres than in metropolitan shack areas.

Housing in informal settlements

Hindson and McCarthy (1994) pointed out it is a misconception that all housing in informal settlements is flimsy and unhygienic and it is certainly not true that all the houses are austere and lacking in basic necessities. In reality, there exists a wide range of types and standards of housing types, their durability, the environment they create for their inhabitants and the impact they have on the environment.

Housing is, however, usually constructed from material that is easily available. This may be tin, wood, iron, plastic, partition boards, mud, blocks and bricks. Very often, homes demonstrate the creative use of discarded materials. For example, houses in Canaan, were constructed from materials gathered from the

nearby rubbish dump (Annecke, 1992). Old "For Sale" signs and a discarded masonite roadhouse menu were, for example, used for walls, and a wire mesh windscreen from a bus originally intended to protect the driver from stone throwing was used as a burglar guard. In Bhambayi, the base of a bed has been used as a gate and an up side down Coke bottle serves as a home made shower (Personal observation).

Annecke (1992) noted that homes in Canaan were made to look attractive and I have also noted this in my own observations during my work in informal settlements. Lace curtains, wall-paper made from newspapers and cartons, tables covered with gift wrapping paper and linoleum on the floors all serve to create a more pleasant living environment. Video footage of a film made in Bhambayi to illustrate the benefit of electricity in the area shows a home with a gold fish happily swimming in a fish tank which is aerated by the newly installed electric point.

Worldwide, informal settlements are often to be found on land that is unsuitable for human settlement - on steep hillsides, swampy low lying land, landfill sites, beside open sewers, and near noisy airports or industrial sites (Mitchell and Bevan, 1992). In South Africa, many examples of such informal settlements exist and their location makes them prone to the negative effects of natural disasters. Homes built on river banks collapse during floods. For example, residents of Stjwetla in Gauteng, braved the flooded Jukskei river to retrieve their possessions being washed in the floods (Mail and Guardian, 11.02. 2000). Despite a history of flooding, people refused to move and rebuilt their shacks on the same sites.

Because shacks are often built closely together, and because of the reliance on

gas and paraffin as sources of energy, fire is a hazard. In February 2000, for example, a fire started by a candle swept through the small settlement of Vikani on the banks of the Umgeni River and destroyed more than 200 shacks. (The Natal Mercury, 10.02.2000). Several months later also, 20 shacks were burned down in the Kennedy Road Informal Settlement (Daily News, 20.06.2000).

Services: Electricity, water, refuse removal and sanitation

In informal settlements where services are not provided, energy needs are met by use of paraffin, gas, candles, wood and coal while water is fetched from nearby streams and taps in neighbouring areas. Meeting energy and water needs is a time consuming task that impacts heavily on women. Using alternate forms of energy and water can be hazardous in terms of risk of injury (burns) and disease (diarrhoea), and children are particularly vulnerable (Annecke, 1992).

A general perception is that informal settlements lack basic services. While this is true in many cases, it must also be acknowledged that a concerted effort has been made in the past few years to improve the delivery of essential services to informal settlements. Pre-paid meters for electricity supply and communal standpipes or water kiosks have been instrumental in improving the supply of these services. Problems continue to be experienced, however, with people in some communities damaging water kiosks and pipes (causing leaks from which they can get free water), making illegal connections to the electricity grid and assaulting officials who install electricity (May, May, Newton, Persad and Stavrou, 1994).

According to May, et al (1994), settlements that have services are

characterised by:

- mixed energy use when electricity runs out
- appliance ownership is restricted to smaller, less sophisticated appliances with the exception of television sets
- the major benefit of electricity was seen to be its convenience
- the major benefit of water supply was seen to be that it was clean
- electricity contributed to the start of small business in only ten percent of households

Health

The type of shelter available to people has the ability to either nurture or damage health. Coovadia (1992:7) wrote that “faulty design, little lighting, damp, lack of safe amenities, poor food storage and cooking facilities and faulty ventilation lead to rapid spread of infectious diseases, respiratory problems, skin diseases and accidents”. Health is necessary for improving productivity among workers, improving household incomes, and improving children’s ability to concentrate and achieve academically (Harris, in Grant and Meicklejohn, 1994). Health is thus fundamental to people being able to function effectively.

In general, conditions in informal settlements are not conducive to health. Many informal settlements lack sewage systems and the health implications are enormous. In Canaan, for example, lack of sanitation lead to high incidents of diarrhoea in the community. As has already been mentioned this informal settlement was next to a rubbish dump and residents scavenged food from here. This rotten and unhygienic food contributed to cases of diarrhoea (Annecke, 1992). High rates of parasitic infections, which are directly linked to inadequate sanitation and clean water, have been noted in children in the

Briardene informal settlements (Kvalsig, undated).

Grant and Meicklejohn (1994) reviewed health facilities in informal settlements in the greater Durban region and concluded that health facilities were geared to only the most fundamental daily health requirements. Of 82 informal settlements surveyed, only five had permanent clinics in the area. A further four had access to a clinic in the neighbouring area while 20 were serviced by a weekly mobile clinic. Thirty one settlements had no health facilities.

Education

In a modern industrial society, especially in urban areas, it is almost impossible for illiterate and poorly educated people to access the labour market. Apartheid policy resulted in wide variations in the extent and quality of education provided for South African children, the legacy of which is that many Black adults are still functionally illiterate (Wilson and Ramphele, 1989). The school disruptions that resulted from the liberation struggle exacerbated this situation. Literacy campaigns and education facilities are thus urgently needed in informal settlements. Grant and Meiklejohn's study (1994) revealed, however, that these types of facilities were sorely lacking. Of the 82 informal settlements surveyed only 10 had crèches for young children and 31 had no provision at all for education.

Recreation

Recreation consists of those relaxing and restoring activities undertaken by people when not engaged with obligatory activities (Butler Adams, in Grant and Meiklejohn, 1994). As an end in itself, recreation can be a desirable leisure time activity. However, it can also be a means to an end and is a way of helping people to be involved in activities that have specific therapeutic effects such as

improving interpersonal skills, learning values and experiencing a sense of belonging (Toseland and Rivas, 1984). Indeed, research indicates that for many young black people recreation is the only source of excitement, enjoyment, fulfilment and self worth. For these young people, recreation “can spell the difference between hope and opportunity or frustration, regression, crime and violence” (Grant and Meiklejohn, 1994:144).

Because the emphasis is on fun, rather than on problems and pathology, recreation groups have the potential to attract those who might be resistant to formal helping systems that sometimes have the effect of “pathologising” people. In fact, the Goldstone Commission of Inquiry regarding the Prevention of Public Violence and Intimidation (1994) recommended that programmes for children affected by public violence would be of maximum benefit if they were developed in such a way as to minimise the emphasis on pathology (Duncan and Rock, undated).

Recreational facilities and opportunities are therefore essential for the well being of people. Residents of informal settlements lack these opportunities. Only two out of 82 settlements surveyed had sports fields, and formal church structures that could provide venues for recreational activities were found in only two (Grant and Meiklejohn, 1994).

Conflict and violence as a feature of life in informal settlements

South Africa has a long history of violence dating back many years. Hindson and Morris (1994) pointed out that in the years prior to 1970, violence took the form of criminalising transgressions against urban apartheid regulations and security laws. Violence increased in mid 1970s and until the mid 1980s with increased resistance to apartheid and was concentrated mainly in formal

townships. This took the form of clashes between residents and township administration, police and army.

From the mid 1980s onwards, informal settlements became the foci of conflict and violence and informal settlements have gained the reputation of being hotbeds of violence, conflict and crime. Newspaper headlines such as, "*Bhambayi anti peace element.....responsible for the attack on four peace monitors*" (Natal on Saturday, 10.9.1994) and "*Three die in Bhambayi clashes*" (Daily News, 2.11.1998) did little to dispel these public perceptions. That these public perceptions had substance was borne out by research which indicated that the highest incidents of violence did occur in informal settlements (Richards, 1995).

One approach to analysing the conflict, specifically in KwaZulu-Natal, has been to assert that this struggle reflected the sharply opposing ideologies of the Central Government and the KwaZulu homeland authority (where the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) had the majority) on the one hand, and the liberation movements such as the United Democratic Front, the African National Congress and the Congress of South African Trade Unions on the other. Nzimande and Thuli (1991, quoted in Graaff, 1996) described the violence in KwaZulu Natal as an "apartheid war" aimed at destabilising the democratic forces. The role of the IFP was seen as central to the on-going violence for two reasons. Firstly, the IFP was seen as a creation, and an extension, of the apartheid system. It was operating within apartheid structures and therefore had little legitimacy to govern the people. Secondly, the violence was seen as a desperate attempt by the IFP to maintain its power base and it, therefore, had no interest in stopping the violence.

Other analysts, however, have pointed out that this increased violence took place during the years when apartheid was declining and when many of the restrictive policies of apartheid were being lifted. They asserted that other factors therefore need to be considered when examining violence and conflict in informal settlements. De Minnaar (1992:37) claimed that the conflict and violence had more to do with the socio-economic conditions prevailing at the time and stated that "competition for scarce resources, employment opportunities and access to land became symptomatic of the informal settlements" and that it was this that accounted for much of the conflict. Hindson and Morris (1994) asserted that the struggle for control over daily necessities which are not provided for by local authorities led to conflict.

The link between political and socio-economic conditions becomes clear when the competition for resources is seen in the broader political context. The IFP controlled the KwaZulu legislative assembly and thus the allocation of resources. Local authorities were also primarily dominated by the IFP. The extra parliamentary United Democratic Front had employed a strategy of non-collaboration with government institutions, and would not negotiate with government or local structures. The only way to access resources and power was therefore via political confrontation (Zulu and Stavrou, 1990).

Social factors can also be seen to have played a contributing factor in the conflict and violence, which also took the form of the young versus the old. Younger people aligned themselves with the ANC because their ideology attracted them and they could use it to justify their rejection of authority. Older, more traditional people supported the IFP and looked to it as a point of continuity in a world full of stress and change.

From the mid 1980s onwards, a new factor entered the picture, that is, the role of "war lords". Also referred to as "squatter lords", these local strongmen organised vigilantes to curb crime. In return, they collected "taxes" to pay them and used their power to prevent outsiders from coming into the area. These "war lords" tended to be allied with Inkatha and in return for providing men for IFP rallies, they would be left alone (de Minnaar, 1992).

A further explanation for the explosion of violence in South African society was advanced by Campbell (1992, quoted in Graaff, 1996). He argued that poverty undermined the feelings of masculinity and thus made it impossible for low-income men to play the roles of provider and leader. This led to feelings of failure and of not being respected by younger people. This frustration could lead to alcohol abuse, assault and infidelity. A further factor exacerbating this situation is that the younger generation tended to have better education and were seen as a challenge by the older generation. One way of teaching them a lesson was to resort to violence.

Since the 1990s, the form of violence has become more complex and has spread geographically. Increased criminal activities have been made possible by loss of control over arms supplies and distribution by opposition and security forces. People and organisations have experienced difficulties in making the transition from military opposition style politics to an open democratic style. Political differences, leadership struggles and struggles for the communities' allegiance have continued to be "resolved" by intimidation and fighting rather than by negotiation and compromise. Competition for economic power has also resulted in transport related violence and taxi wars.

This section has outlined a number of aspects of life in informal settlements, all

of which impact on both how residents of such areas see themselves and how social workers who work there see them. The circumstances in informal settlements impact on how social work might be offered in these areas.

SOCIAL WORK IN INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS: A REVIEW OF SOUTH AFRICAN LITERATURE

Literature concerning social work in informal settlements in South Africa is fairly sparse. However suggestions for practice have been made. This section provides an overview of the South African literature relating to social work in informal settlements.

Community work in informal settlements

A special edition of the journal, *Social Work Practice*, in 1992, introduced South African social workers to the notion of community work in informal settlements. Two articles (Transvaal Provincial Administration (TPA), 1992 and Ramasar, 1992) reported on projects that were in progress in two informal settlements, Rietfontein and Besters. Ramasar (1992) described the first phase of work in Besters. This included community entry activities such as informal talks with individuals, moving about and being visible in the community, meeting formal and informal service systems, as well as direct activities such as networking with state departments, clinics and other organisations, and advocacy which included drawing the attention of authorities to conditions in Besters.

The TPA article described a three phase approach to work - assessment and analysis of data, action during which a number of projects were established and evaluation. Social workers were urged to use techniques such as questioning,

listening, observing and engaging and the roles of guide, educator, teacher, trainer, enabler, interpreter, facilitator, innovator, organiser, motivator, promoter, broker, mediator, mobiliser, initiator, and minister were mentioned as being important. Both these articles were positive in tone and gave little indication that there could be any difficulties in practising social work in informal settlements.

In another article, Rothmund and Kela (1992) identified the tasks and roles of social workers in informal settlements. These included empowering the community, developing community involvement and participation, understanding community dynamics and structures, networking, and making himself (sic) known and marketing his (sic) agency's services. These authors warned that having the correct attitude was important. A correct attitude would include a willingness to treat residents as equals and with respect. That this fundamental value of social work which first year students are introduced to had to be re-iterated suggests that social workers would have negative attitudes towards informal settlements. Writing in a context in which social workers were mainly white and middle class, Rothmund and Kela (1992) pointed out that attitudes of racism and paternalism would spell the death of community work in informal settlements.

Writing about community participation in health care, Toms (1992) pointed out that encouraging community participation would require proceeding at the pace of the community, understanding the community dynamics and identifying community structures, having a point of entry in the community and developing trusting relationships. He pointed out that difficulties would be experienced where communities were divided and also warned that attitudes of tokenism, paternalism and racism on the part of development practitioners would hinder

community participation.

Following these articles, there was a dearth of published literature concerning direct social work practice in informal settlements. The political changes in the country and the implications of this for social work policy, practice and education received the majority of attention in the social work journals.

A participatory partnership model for social work in informal settlements

In a doctoral study, van Schalkwyk (1997) developed a three phase model which she called a "participatory partnership model" for social work practice in informal settlements. This model was strongly based on a people centred philosophy of welfare which concentrates on the "person", rather than the "problem", post modern ideas which emphasise the importance of multiple realities and understanding the life world of people as they experience it, and systems theory. These phases are:

PRE-PARTICIPATORY PHASE

The aims of this phase are to gain a holistic view of people and their life world and to understand how they experience their situation. To do this the social worker has to enter the community from a position of humbleness, rather than power, acknowledging that residents of informal settlements are the only experts on their own situation. This requires that social workers ask questions in a sensitive manner, listen carefully and establish trusting, caring and empathic relationships. It is important, said van Schalkwyk, to "dialogue" with people as this helps them to begin to rid themselves of apathy and to begin to participate in the process of improving their situation. At this stage, the social worker is still an outsider and the residents of the informal settlement, potential clients. This phase may be time consuming and emotionally draining for social

workers as they slowly gain entry into the community.

PARTICIPATORY PARTNERSHIP PHASE

During this phase, a working agreement is established and the community (group) becomes the client. Details about what is hoped will be achieved and the tasks and duties of each party is negotiated and specified. It is important to foster open communication, that everyone involved is informed at all stages and that trust building continues. The social worker plays a facilitative role in helping people to set realistic goals and to implement plans to achieve these.

EMPOWERMENT PHASE

As clients and social workers gain awareness of each other and what each party has to offer, a shared pool of resources is created. Echoing Freirian thought, van Schalkwyk postulated that constant dialogue, reflection and critical thinking would help clients to become conscientised and would enhance their capacity and self reliance. During this phase, the social worker begins to pose challenging questions, encouraging the clients to think about social, political and economic possibilities and their role in achieving what they desire.

This model provides an alternative to the rather technical description of community entry, identification and analysis of problems, intervention and evaluation previously discussed. These activities are all important in van Schalkwyk's model but instead of incorporating empowerment strategies into these phases, she makes empowerment and self- reliance the core concepts and integrates the traditional phases into this process.

Challenges and obstacles facing social work in informal settlements

Social workers in informal settlements have much to learn from the community

development literature concerning work in poor communities. Drawing on this literature, as well as some social work literature, this section examines some of the challenges that are likely to confront social workers working in informal settlements.

NOTIONS OF COMMUNITY

Social work theory concerning working with communities proceeds from the assumption that a community exists and social workers generally work with what are called “geographically functional” (Ferrinho, 1981) communities. “Geographic” refers to the boundaries of the physical of a particular area (a suburb of a city or a section of an informal settlement) and “functional” refers to a group of people having a common interest (for example, parents of disabled children or unemployed people).

Several authors have warned against romanticising the notion of community (Chambers, in de Beer and Swanepoel, 1998) and as the previous sections have illustrated, informal settlement communities are not homogenous, organised structures whose residents automatically share a vision of working together to uplift their community. In informal settlements, the notion of community is not clear and in many cases is a misnomer. One can hardly expect a sense of community to exist when people have come into the settlement from different areas, when people bring with them the problems from their original areas, and when people are unsettled, insecure and fearful of their future. Divisions, conflict and mistrust undermine efforts by social workers to offer services in informal settlements.

The initial stages are critical for the success of a community development programme. Community entry is compromised when leadership within informal

settlements is unsettled. In some areas, community organisation is weak (Rothmund and Kela, 1992), and the leaders are not known. The local elite may act as "gate keepers" – people who have information and can share it or not according to their own agendas (le Roux, 1998). In the same way as "war lords" can block development, they can block the entry of social work services.

Rational planning assumes a stable and predictable environment. In informal settlements the opposite is likely to be true (de Beer and Swanepoel, 1998). Where there is uncertainty, social workers will have to remember that planning needs to be incremental. Short term objectives should be attainable in order to create confidence and motivation for further efforts.

UNDERSTANDING POVERTY

A number of characteristics associated with informal settlements has already been discussed. It was clear from this discussion that informal settlements are among the least resourced and the poorest sections of our country. Understanding the implications of this for social work practice requires understanding how individual persons experience poverty and disadvantage, not only in material terms but also in emotional and psychological terms.

Many of the factors described are inter-linked and can be understood in terms of what has been described as the "deprivation trap" (Chambers, 1983:112) which is a feature of disadvantaged communities. According to Chambers (1983), five clusters of disadvantage can be described and each of these is inter-linked in a causal fashion. The factors are: Poverty, vulnerability, isolation, powerlessness and physical weakness.

An example of how these factors are inter-linked is as follows. People who are

poor and who have few assets cannot afford good nutrition and this leads to poor health and physical weakness. They become isolated because they cannot afford social outings, access to education, to buy newspapers or to access television. They are vulnerable because they have no reserves to meet any unforeseen contingencies such as funerals. They have low status and a feeling of powerlessness. Physical weakness, in turn, contributes to poverty because people cannot expend energy looking for work or cannot work regularly because of ill health. Scarce resources are further used in trying to access health care. It also sustains isolation because they cannot attend social functions and it contributes to their vulnerability by further limiting the ability to deal with any crisis. Powerlessness is also further increased because people with ill health are unable to participate fully in political processes that might increase their power. The poor, according to Freire (1972) have developed a culture of silence. They tend to have a poor self image, a lack of self worth and a decreased sense of purpose. In these circumstances, it is difficult to motivate people to become involved in projects because they can't make a difference.

One of most tangible social consequences of poverty is crime (Wilson and Ramphela, 1989). Where work is difficult to find and where communities are in a state of upheaval (as are most informal settlements), people are more likely to rob and assault others, sometimes to make a living and sometimes out of frustration and despair. Living in a community characterised by violence and crime further feeds into feelings of hopelessness and powerlessness.

UNDERSTANDING THE EFFECTS OF VIOLENCE

The effects of violence on children has been well documented. Children exposed to violence become anxious, withdrawn, tense, bitter and distrusting of adults (Gama,1990). In addition, the schooling of children is disrupted and

they are often not properly looked after during incidents of violence (McKendrick and Senoamadi, 1993). The long term implications are severe as children begin to think that violence is "normal" (Klaasen, 1990; Malepa, 1990) and a "very thin line exists between being a victim of violence and beginning to commit violent acts oneself" (Duncan and Rock, 1995:3). Concerted efforts therefore need to be made to reach those children who have been affected, either directly or indirectly, by violence. This becomes especially important when traditional support structures such as the family have broken down as is so often the case in informal settlements. Indeed, in many instances, the parents themselves are perpetrators and victims of violence and as a result the family becomes dysfunctional and unable to fulfil its role of socialising the child adequately.

Adults, too, are not immune to the effects of violence and may suffer from post-traumatic stress disorders. In the following chapter, people from Bhambayi describe their experiences of violence and these stories illustrate vividly how these experiences have impacted on their lives.

ATTITUDES OF RESIDENTS TO SOCIAL WORKERS

Rothmund and Kela (1992) pointed out that residents of informal settlements may feel prone to exploitation, disempowered, and may have a poor self image. This could lead to a mistrust of strangers, including social workers. Similarly, van Schalkwyk (1997) explained that people in informal settlements have been deprived of a quality life caused by inequality, oppression and a distorted allocation of resources. This, she says, must influence their view of life and will impact on their receptiveness to social work services. They may for example, greet the social worker with hostility because they identify social work with "authority".

Under these conditions, one must expect that community entry and the establishment of trusting relationships will be a time consuming undertaking.

PRACTICAL PROBLEMS

Time is a problem. People living in informal settlements are involved in a day to day struggle for survival. Where there is no water, fetching water from communal taps, washing clothes in nearby streams or at communal taps all takes time. It would be unrealistic to expect these people to have the time and the energy for meetings or to take on responsibilities in the community. Furthermore, those people who are working cannot take off time for meetings as they need to spend their available free time on family or household commitments - (in contrast to rich people who can employ poor people to look after their homes so they can get involved in community activities). Those who are casual workers cannot afford to miss the opportunity of a work offer to attend meetings. People sometimes get casual work in another district for short periods and may be absent from the settlement for this time, thus being unable to attend meetings and participate in community activities.

No electricity makes it very difficult to organise meetings at night. Lack of resources, such as adequate venues, makes it difficult to organise meetings at all! Low levels of literacy and education impact on people participating in meetings through minute taking and a few literate people get to take on all the responsibility. They then either become too powerful or they burnout because the burden cannot be shared. Communication is difficult because of a lack of telephones and postal services in informal settlements.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has drawn attention to the varied nature of informal settlements and the complex set of political, economic and social factors that have contributed to their growth and development. Conditions in informal settlements vary but high unemployment and a lack of resources mean that for many people, life in informal settlements is hard.

The following chapter focuses on one specific informal settlement, Bhambayi and provides an in-depth account of the problems facing this community and the challenges of social work in such an area.

CHAPTER FIVE

BHAMBAYI : A CASE STUDY

The previous chapter provided an introduction to the varied nature of informal settlements and illustrated the breadth of human experience in informal settlements. This chapter now moves from the general to the specific and discusses in detail one informal settlement, Bhambayi. It draws on published material, newspaper reports, student and supervisor records as well as my own experience and observations having spent one morning per week in Bhambayi over the past six years.

The chapter begins by illustrating how the unique history of this area has been influenced by the interaction of political, social and economic forces. This history accounts, at least in part, for the nature of the problems experienced by people in Bhambayi, but also influences their responses to services. The second section of the chapter tells the story of social services in Bhambayi, and specifically the work of the University of Natal social work student unit in Bhambayi. The third theme to be discussed highlights the difficulties and challenges facing social work in such an area.

INTRODUCING BHAMBAYI

This section describes the history of Bhambayi and begins by describing its location. It goes on to trace its development from a "model" community established by Ghandi to a violence torn informal settlement, and then documents the most recent attempts to reconstruct and develop the area.

Location

Bhambayi is situated about 25 kilometers north of the Durban City Centre in the Inanda area. It is situated just to the north of the main road (R93) that runs in a westerly direction from the N2 highway. This road passes the formal townships of KwaMashu and Ntuzuma on the left and the Phoenix Industrial area on the right. Bhambayi adjoins the predominantly Indian area of Phoenix at the north and the formal housing scheme of Ohlange on the west. Figure 2, overleaf, shows the location of Bhambayi in relation to the surrounding areas.

Bhambayi incorporates three areas: The Phoenix Settlement or "apex" owned by the Phoenix Settlement trust, the "landowners" or private owned areas, and the Buffer strip between Inanda and Phoenix owned by the local authority. Figure 3 on page 138, illustrates important landmarks in Bhambayi.

Nearly 2 400 mud structures provide homes for approximately 13000 people (Census 96). Although close to the Phoenix Industrial area, Bhambayi has a rural air to it - trees are still fairly plentiful and it is not unusual to come across chickens, goats and, on occasions, cattle walking along the dirt roads. This peaceful air belies the complex nature of Bhambayi. Bhambayi came into being as a result of violent conflict and during the early 1990s was known to be one of the most violent "hot-spots" in Kwazulu Natal.

Historical background

The name "Bhambayi" is corruption of the word "Bombay" and bears testimony to the earliest occupiers of this land. As mentioned above, Bhambayi incorporates an area known as the "apex" or the Phoenix settlement. This settlement was founded by Mahatma Ghandi in 1904 and was occupied by his descendants until 1985. It was here that Ghandi established a model community, based on his philosophy that the best way of life was a simple

Figure 2: Map showing the location of Bhambayi

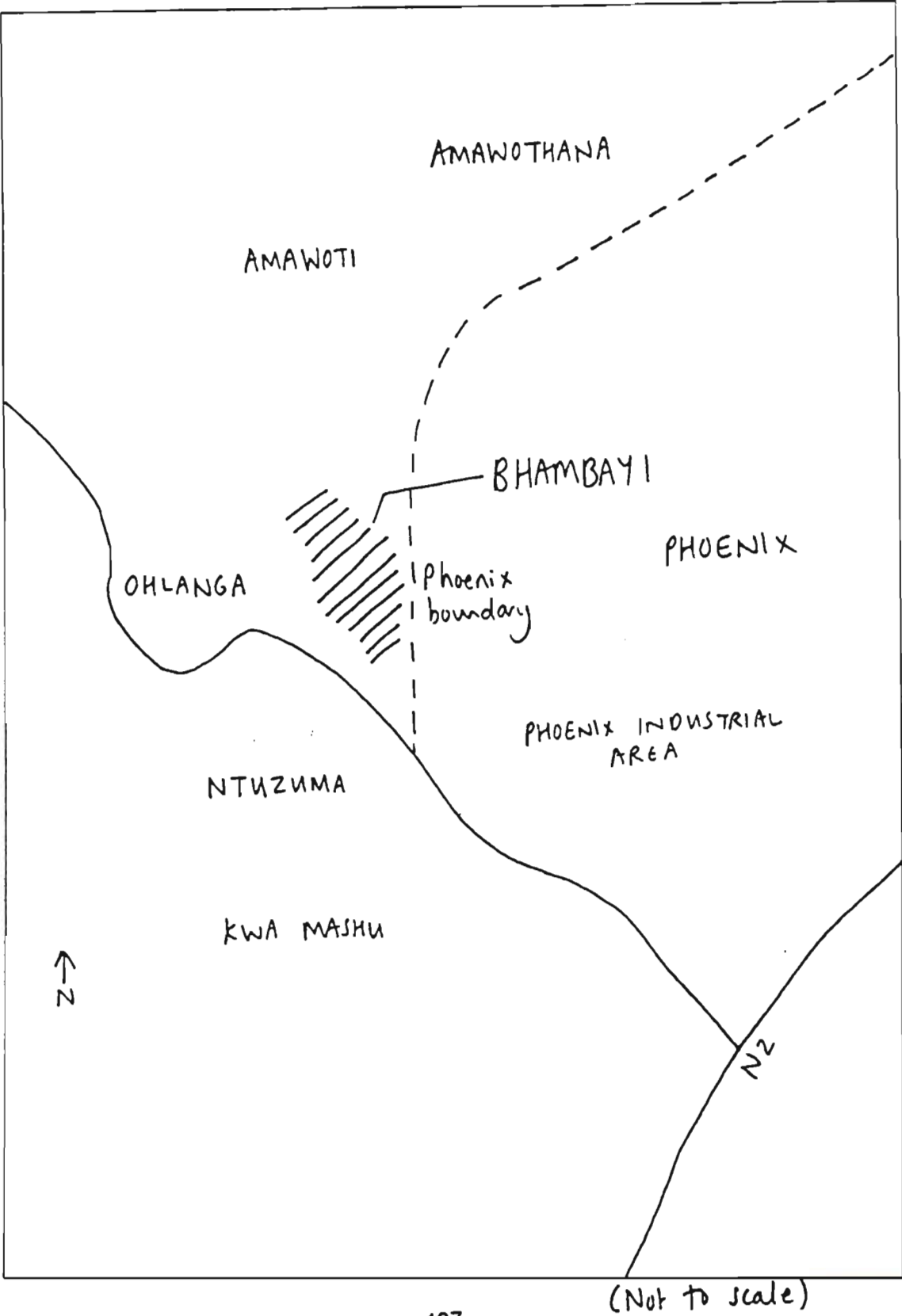
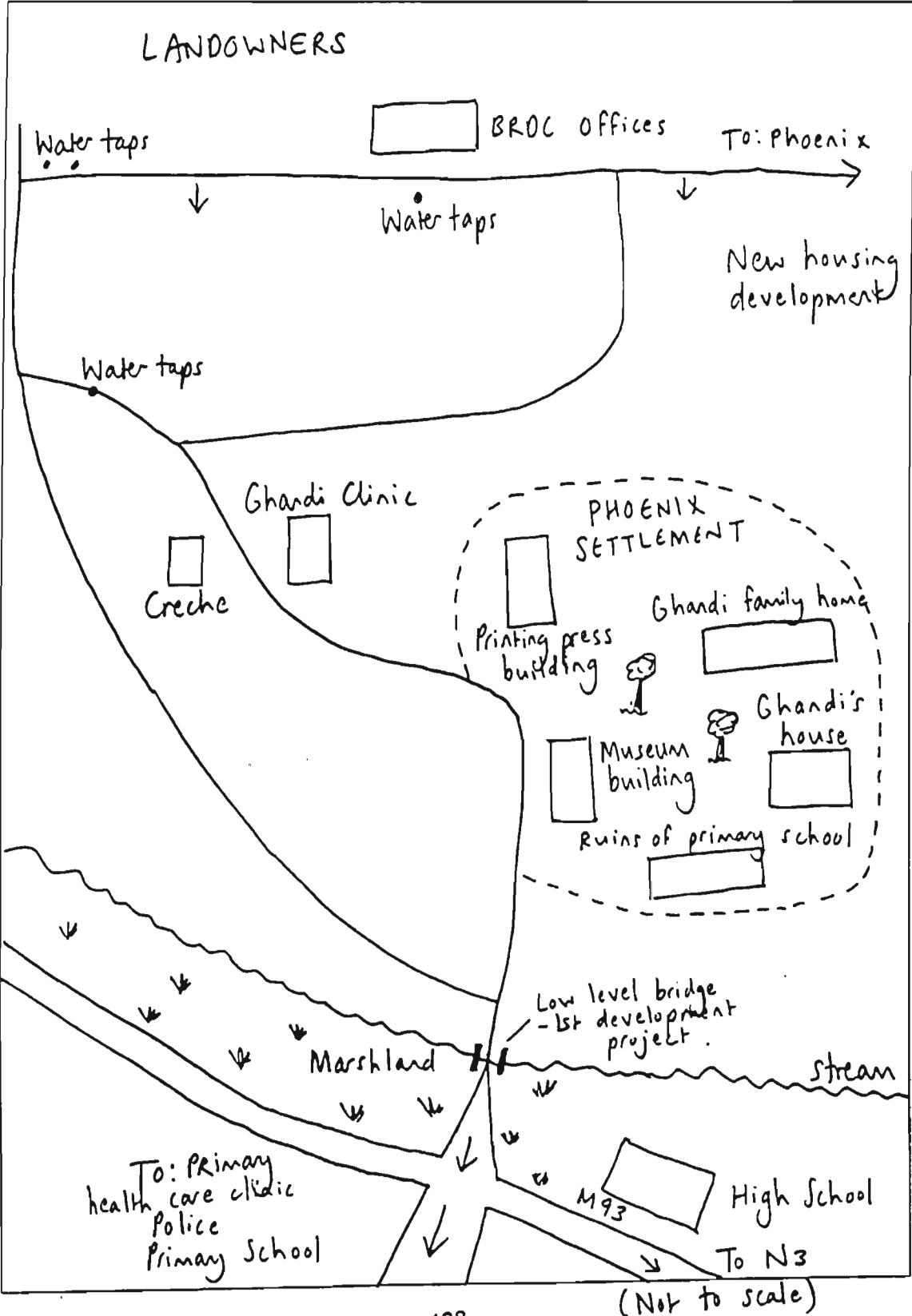


Figure 3: Map showing important landmarks in Bhambayi



communal life where people worked with their hands and practised self-denial and self control. Ghandi had already established a newspaper, the Indian Opinion, and moved the printing press to the settlement. All the members of the settlement were involved in printing the paper and in cultivating fruit and vegetable gardens. It was here that he began to develop his ideas of "Satyagraha" (literally "truth force") from which evolved the concept of peaceful resistance which was used to great effect in the Indian fight for independence from Great Britain. That Bhambayi was to become one of the most violent areas in KwaZulu Natal is ironic.

This particular area is owned by the Phoenix Settlement Trust and comprises the original homesteads, the printing press building and the museum building, as well as a clinic building and a creche building. These buildings were all extensively vandalised during the violence of the 1980s and 1990s but have now either been restored or are in the process of being restored. The Phoenix Settlement was officially re-opened in 2000 by State President Mbeki and it is hoped that the area will become a tourist attraction bringing much needed income into the area. The newspaper, now named the Opinion, was re-launched by Deputy State President, Jacob Zuma on 15 October 2000. The newspaper publishes educational articles and news of local events for the local community. These leaders emphasised the re-introduction of the spirit of co-operation and non-violent means of conflict resolution established by Ghandi in the early 1990s.

Although there were always a small number of informal dwellers on the Phoenix Settlement, it was only in August 1985 that widespread riots in the Inanda area resulted in Indian people being forced out of the area. To understand the nature of these riots, the nature of the situation at that time has to be considered.

What is now Bhambayi and the surrounding areas of Inanda are part of what is known as Released Area 33. In terms of the Land Act of 1936 all such "released" areas were to be incorporated into nearby African areas, in this case to form part of the KwaZulu bantustan. Indian settlement in this area however prevented the implementation of this plan. One analyst was of the opinion that the subsequent violence in Inanda was carefully orchestrated by the apartheid government and that African people were manipulated into attacking Indian people in the area: "How better to short circuit the process than through a racial attack" (Meer, 1985, cited in Hughes, 1987). In a submission to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (established in 1995 to investigate the causes, nature and extent of human rights abuses during the apartheid era), the chairman of the Phoenix Trust, Mewa Ramgobin, alleged that these attacks were carried out with the knowledge and co-operation of the security forces as part of a plan to entrench apartheid by consolidating the KwaZulu Bantustan (Sunday Tribune, 26 October 1997).

In the early 1980s, Indian landlords in Inanda were pressured by state departments to comply with existing legislation that required landlords to provide water and sewage to squatters on their land. It was also made clear to them that the area was destined for African occupation. Evictions resulted and friction over scarce resources added to tensions. At a meeting in July 1985, a speaker called for Indians to be driven out of Inanda because they were refusing to sell the land and were blocking development (Sutcliffe and Wellings, 1985, cited in Hughes, 1987).

On 5 August 1995, violence erupted in Inanda - school boycotts were in fact taking place in all Durban townships primarily in reaction to the assassination of a prominent member of the United Democratic Front, Victoria Mxenge. Looting

and burning of Indian owned property took place and by the 9 August the focus was on the Phoenix Settlement. A crowd estimated to number about 300 stormed the settlement and set the buildings alight (Hughes, 1987). Very soon thereafter, land invasions began and squatters took over the land. In 1986, it was estimated that there were 30 000 people in the area and by 1992 this had increased to 50 000 (Hindson and McCarthy, 1994). These figures may have been an over-estimation because although thousands fled during the 1993/1994 upheavals, the 1996 census figures reveal that there are 2 395 structures and 13 594 people living in Bhambayi (Census, 1996).

In 1992, the then Durban Corporation recognised Bhambayi as a permanent settlement and set aside R12 million for development. One of the first projects was the construction of a low-lying bridge over the river that provided better access to Bhambayi. Development was, however, delayed because of the outbreak of violence in Bhambayi particularly between 1992 and 1994.

Violence in Bhambayi and its impact on residents

Bhambayi has long been associated with violence - it came into being as a result of violence and experienced much internal strife in its early days. This section provides an account of the violence, an analysis of the causes and accounts of how people living in Bhambayi experienced the violence.

After the initial invasion of the land, the settlement grew quickly. In 1986, a large number of people fleeing the disturbances in Umbumbulu on the South Coast fled to Bhambayi - many of these people were Pondo in origin and were attracted in part to the large number of Pondo people already in Bhambayi. They brought with them an "*inyanga*" (a traditional healer) who was seen to be in competition with the already powerful "*inganya*" in Bhambayi. "*Inyangas*"

occupied a prominent position in the community as they provided "*umuthi*" (medicines) for people engaging in battle. These medicines are said to provide courage and protection to the men engaged in battle. Within weeks of the arrival of the new settlers, violence broke out. Many attributed this to conflict between the Zulu and the Pondos, but other analysts believed it was essentially a conflict over access to scarce resources - in this case, the only water tap in the area (Ainslie and De Haas, 1998).

A period of relative peace followed until 1992/1993 when violence once again erupted. At first sight the conflict seems to have been the result of a power struggle within the African National Congress (ANC) in the area. However, in order to understand this one must also look at how the area was divided spatially. The upper section (the reds) comprised the bulk of the area between the Apex and Ohlange, while the lower section (the greens) comprised the area between the Apex and Phoenix. The upper section was controlled by the ANC youth league while the lower section was in the hands of the older, more politically conservative men. Each section had its own structures, including people's courts which were responsible for the social organisation in the area. Strong leadership by the ANC chairman, Pat Marshall, in the upper section, contributed to this area being socially cohesive and able to defuse potential conflict. His death under suspicious circumstances (he allegedly hanged himself in 1991) left a leadership vacuum. Youth leaders demanded a commission of inquiry into his death but this was ignored by the older leaders. Tensions then began to mount within the ANC structures as well as between the two sections in Bhambayi.

The refusal of the lower section to accept the leadership of the youth came to a head when they refused to attend meetings and night camps. These night

camps were mandatory if there was any external threat to the community and had become a way of life and a means of defence. They also began to use their own "*umuthi*" which in effect sent a message that they saw themselves as separate from and independent of the upper section. The upper section then threatened to deport residents of the lower section and within days this lower section changed its allegiance to the Inkatha Freedom party (IFP). Ainslie and De Haas (1998) asserted that this group never numbered more than several dozen but that their numbers were swelled by outsiders in deliberate attempts to destabilise the area.

By March 1993, at least 78 people had been killed and 300 shacks destroyed in violence. Reports were that the security forces fuelled the conflict by refusing to disarm residents and by actively facilitating the flow of arms to the IFP area (Ainslie and De Haas, 1998). The security forces, and particularly the Indian members of the force, were accused of racist behaviour leading to further disintegration of race relations in the area. During July 1993, another 18 people died, many of them by highly sophisticated automatic and semi-automatic rifles (Ainslie and De Haas, 1998).

A further 33 deaths were reported in the period between September and December 1993 and 20 in January and February of 1994. Since April 1994 (when the first democratic elections were held in South Africa) killings in Bhambayi have reduced and have been linked to criminal activity and taxi wars.

While these figures give some indication of the extent of the problem, its horror becomes more personal when people who experienced it tell their stories. The following excerpts are from a video made by the School of Drama and Performance studies at the University of Natal and the Bhambayi Reconstruction

and Development Committee (BRDC). Staff and students from the School of Drama and Performance Studies were introduced to the BRDC by the social work student unit and together the idea of using drama to help community groups to reflect on their lives led to the idea of a community video. Using the ideas of Augusta Boal, this video sought to construct a new story for Bhambayi - a story that Bhambayi was a peaceful place where development could take place freely - and helped the residents of Bhambayi to reflect on their violent past, to comment on the development taking place and to express their hopes for a better future. Their stories, which were told in isiZulu, were translated by a community leader. This person was not a language expert and his English in parts reflects this.

A dominant feature of the effects of violence was that family life was disrupted. Able-bodied men stayed at the shacks to defend them while women, children and older people fled and slept in bushes. Fear of what they would find when they returned in the mornings dominated their thoughts. Even sleeping in the clinic building was not safe.

"We just found that when we came from work there was no one at home, people had run away. The situation was very bad during those days. That was when we started sleeping in the bushes, the young kids, the women and the old men" (K).

"We were treated very painfully and badly. We were sleeping in the bushes with our young children leaving the older boys at the houses with no hope that when we return from where we were hiding we will see them. Even when you hide there is no sleep" (P).

"Once we came back looking for a place to hide, we hid at the clinic

building. While we were sleeping we heard gun shots at night shooting at the clinic but by luck we survived but we don't know how" (M).

People experienced the loss of family and possessions and financial hardship resulted. Homes were burned down and possessions were looted. The loss in some cases was all the more distressing as possessions were still being paid for and people were left with debts for goods they no longer had. In some cases, people lost their means of livelihood. The loss of family members who were breadwinners or who played an important role in protecting the women was for many people devastating.

" My house was burned down, my furniture was looted while I was still paying my instalments at Hanwood Furniture Shop and the same thing happen to my kitchen cabinets (G).

" We were sleeping in the bushes. We reached a time when everyone forgot that he or she could still reach their house. Luckily some of them found their houses still standing while others were burned down. On top of that we even lost our brothers and sisters and prominent family members who were supporting us" (J).

"It was sour for everyone who was inside here. No one was happy. People lost the good jobs they had, even now they are not employed.....we are suffering from hunger and poverty from not working for so many years" (W).

"We lost our clients, customers, relatives, shop goods, friends..... we also lost the shop building.... it was burned down with one truck. We had two trucks, one was burned with the shop... (Shopkeeper)

People vividly remembered the trauma they experienced. In the following excerpt, a man remembers his own reluctant role in the violence (he was “forced” to defend himself) and he reflects on how he was “victimised” by having to hunt and eat cats in order to survive.

“I was traumatised by the violence.... I was attacked by people.... and was forced to defend myself. That was how I found myself involved in the violence. There was no way to get out of Bhambayi, even the entrance to go to the butchery were closed. I decided to hunt cats. Together with my friends I was forced to catch cats to have meat for the day..... I stopped eating cats, even to this day I don’t eat cats. That is how I can explain to you how the violence victimised us” (CM)

Violence impacted on development and community based projects. People were unable to meet freely and group activities were difficult to organise.

“Some of our sewing group members were failing to attend our daily gatherings, to those who were sleeping away from Bhambayi it was difficult for them to get inside Bhambayi because no one knows how the situation is inside Bhambayi since they left the previous night.....At other times we ran away when things became bad” (M).

Schooling was disrupted. Apart from the fear and insecurity they must have experienced, this young person recalls how she tried to maintain a normal routine in the midst of all the violence.

“We encountered big problems. We didn’t have time to study. While we were busy reading the school work, we heard people screaming outside and the gun fire also disturbed us” (YG).

Development and peace in Bhambayi

By 1993, the residents of Bhambayi had set up a development committee. The impetus for this came from rumours that the Durban Corporation, which had earmarked R12 million for the development of the area, planned to withdraw the money because of the violence. Ten members of the ANC and IFP were elected to this committee which was initially called the Bhambayi Development Committee (BDC). This committee received training in committee skills, conflict resolution and development issues from a non-governmental organisation and began to prioritise development needs. The first project to be completed was the bridge over the river at the entrance to Bhambayi. This provided easier access to and from Bhambayi and was considered by the community to be a priority. While the contractor provided the expertise, local labour was used and in an attempt to promote peace, equal numbers of people from each political group were employed. This initial project was fraught with difficulties as the workers did not trust each other - to the extent that the BRDC had to provide security for the work parties. It however set the example to be followed in further projects – members from both political parties in the community were to be equally represented in these work parties. In this way, it was hoped that development projects could be used to promote peace and understanding between members of different groups. (Blose, videotape.)

While a beginning was made with infra-structure development, peace initiatives between the two political parties continued. A significant and symbolic gesture was the building of the offices for the BDC in 1997 on the IFP/ANC boundary. Reflecting the change in mood in South Africa as a whole, and signifying its commitment to reconstruction, at this point the committee changed its name to the Bhambayi Reconstruction and Development Committee (BRDC).

In the past four years, street lights have been installed and individual homes are able to access electricity supplies. Additional water stands have been erected. The existing roads have been upgraded and new roads have been built to provide better access to the different parts of Bhambayi. The first 100 new homes have been built and the question of ownership of the land has been resolved. Plans have been passed for the upgrading of the entire area. Bhambayi, according to one community leader, is well on its way to becoming a formal settlement (personal communication with community leader, S) and shaking off, for once and all, its negative image as a violence torn, poverty stricken informal settlement.

This section has provided a brief description of Bhambayi and has traced its development from a peaceful self-sufficient community espousing Gandhian ideals, to a violent and divided community which witnessed the death of many people and the destruction of property, to a community that is now forging a new identity as a formal township for itself. This is the context in which social services have been offered in Bhambayi.

SOCIAL SERVICES IN BHAMBAYI

This section describes the social services that have been offered in Bhambayi. It begins by briefly commenting on the health services provided by the Gandhi clinic and illustrates how the violence referred to earlier affected these services. It then goes on to discuss the activities of the social work student unit. Again, the effect of violence on service provision is illustrated and the difficulties associated with gaining trust and credibility in an informal settlement is discussed. The types of programmes offered are described and finally some of

the particular challenges that have faced the student unit are analysed.

Health services

In 1961, the Phoenix Settlement Trust opened the Ghandi clinic in Bhambayi that provided a valuable primary health care service to the surrounding community. Medical students from the University of Natal worked at the clinic as part of their practical training and also ran health education programmes.

In 1987, a multi-disciplinary project, the Community Mental Health Project (CMHP), was established at Bhambayi. Medical staff and students from the University of Natal as well as psychology staff and interns from both the University of Natal and the University of Durban-Westville were involved in this project. The history of this project and the challenges it faced has been well documented by Petersen and Ramsay (1993). This project began with an investigation into the mental health problems in Bhambayi that revealed a high rate of mental retardation, undisciplined and violent behaviour, and sleeping problems, particularly amongst children and youth. A creche, a women's group and a support group for caregivers of mentally disabled children, as well as a counselling and referral service were established.

Petersen and Ramsay (1993) identified a number of factors that impacted negatively on the project and which eventually led to its closure in 1991. The chaotic and divided nature of the community and changing leadership structures within Bhambayi made working with the community difficult. There was a perception that residents were more concerned about their individual interests than community interests and this, too, impeded the functioning of the project. In a deprived and underdeveloped area such as Bhambayi, mental health was not

a priority and very few people sought assistance for mental health problems of their own accord. It appeared that many people accepted their symptoms as “normal”. The Ghandi clinic had been the main source of referrals and when it closed in 1990 (because of the escalating violence in the area), referrals decreased markedly.

It was into this situation that the social work student unit arrived in 1992.

A theoretical framework for social work in a community

From the very beginning of the life of the student unit in Bhambayi, it was agreed that the unit would offer a holistic and integrated social work service. Drawing primarily on a systems approach, this meant that the concept of “client” would include all social systems and that the client could be an individual, a couple, a group, a family or any combination of these. A variety of practice models, theories and methods could be used to address problems. It was anticipated that community work would be the favoured method of intervention because of the nature of the problems in Bhambayi.

As described in the introductory chapter, social work intervention is a problem solving process and whatever method is used, the basic process follows a similar path. In its simplest form, this requires that the problem be identified, that a plan of intervention be worked out, that the plan be implemented and that the intervention be evaluated. Social work intervention always takes place within a relationship and social work literature has laid great stress on the importance of the helping relationship or helping alliance as being the vehicle for change and development.

The following sections reflect on this process as it was experienced in Bhambayi

and examines some of the factors that influenced the nature of social work services in Bhambayi.

Identifying problems and establishing relationships: Social work students arrive in Bhambayi

The decision of the Centre for Social Work at the University of Natal to establish a social work student unit at Bhambayi was described in Chapter One. In summary, it was a combination of circumstances that led to the decision. A visit to the area as part of a community work course, the enthusiasm of the community leaders for social work services and the lecturing staff's search for relevant fieldwork placements all came together at the same time. In retrospect, it is clear that we did not have all the information about Bhambayi, its history and its problems and that decision was based on a somewhat unrealistic notion that social work students would have a fruitful and exciting practice experience and that the community would benefit from their services. Had we realised what difficulties were to confront us, the decision to send students to Bhambayi may well have been very different.

The first group of four fourth year students arrived in Bhambayi on 3 February 1992, at the beginning of the academic year. The students had an office at the clinic building which was the only structure in Bhambayi that had water and electricity. Our initial plans to focus on community work were immediately challenged as the student social workers were inundated with requests for help. Within the first two months approximately 100 people were seen. Most of the problems centred on the need for identity documents in order to access government grants and pensions. Many people had lost documents in the violence in Bhambayi and needed assistance in replacing these (Supervisors report, 1992). It was felt at the time that offering a tangible, much needed

service was an important means of establishing a relationship and credibility with the community. It was also a useful way of getting to know people and talking to them about what types of problems they and other residents of Bhambayi experienced. Identifying community problems and assessing needs therefore took place simultaneously with the provision of a predominantly casework service.

The women's group started by the CMHP (described above) was still in existence but a core of only five women attended meetings regularly. The prevailing conditions in Bhambayi had impacted on the nature of services offered as well as on the women themselves who attended meetings infrequently. With the arrival of the student unit, enthusiasm for the project was rekindled. This core group mobilised a number of other women and about 20 women became involved in the project. They identified their need to improve their economic status and saw sewing as a means of achieving this. Various training programmes, which included learning both technical (designing, cutting and sewing skills) and organisational skills (planning, budgeting, marketing and costing) skills were implemented. (Supervisor's report, 1993). The group planned to make and sell school uniforms and a budget for the project was drawn up.

It seemed therefore that the student unit had potential to play a useful role in providing social services in Bhambayi and that a positive start had been made. However, before long violence interrupted work of the unit. The impact of conditions in Bhambayi on the student unit is now discussed.

Violence impacts on student social work

During 1993, conditions in Bhambayi made it almost impossible to work with the

community at large. Escalating conflict between the two rival political parties placed certain areas out of bounds to the students. The fact that they were situated at the clinic, which was within the ANC controlled area, meant that they were automatically aligned with the ANC and not welcome in the IFP areas. In fact we were not able to offer services at all to any IFP members. This was something that we had not been aware of when we started work in Bhambayi and something that we were most uncomfortable with. Some members of the women's group stopped attending meetings. During times of violence the building was used by people seeking safety and at times was so full of furniture and "refugees" that the students had no space to work. Because of the volatile political situation, there were long periods when students could not even enter the area. All of this meant that services were interrupted and planning rendered almost impossible. Appointments could often not be kept and had to be re-set only to be missed again because of conditions outside the control of the unit.

Serious consideration therefore needed to be given to the future of the unit and whether it served the purpose for which it was intended. Unable to provide social work services to the community and unable to offer students practice opportunities, it seemed that the closure of the unit was inevitable. Consideration also had to be given to the safety of students and staff. During one particularly frightening incident, students were caught in cross fire between two factions. Fortunately no one was injured but the incident illustrated the danger to students and staff and was of enormous concern to the university staff.

After much discussion, the decision was taken to withdraw the student unit at the end of 1993. Also contributing to this decision was the fear that violence would escalate in the run up to the 1994 general election. The community

leaders were not happy with this decision and so an agreement was made that the situation would be reviewed at the end of 1994. During October 1994, I agreed to investigate possibilities of returning to Bhambayi, the previous supervisor having left the employ of the University of Natal. Together with a student who had been placed at the unit previously, I paid a visit to some of the women from the sewing group. They urged us to return and a meeting with the committee was set up. During this meeting, we were assured that the level of violence had abated and that social work students would be both welcomed back and protected in Bhambayi. Although there was still tension between the two rival political parties and they were still territorially divided, I was assured that people attending meetings at the clinic or coming for services would be safe. In reality this did not materialise until August 1995 when an official peace accord between the two parties in Bhambayi was signed thus making freedom of movement both for the social work students and residents of Bhambayi possible.

Starting over: Students return to Bhambayi

The student unit re-opened in February 1995. The students were again based at the clinic building but we found, to our dismay, that the water and electricity supplies had been cut off. This necessitated our carrying water every day to Bhambayi. Physical conditions were far from ideal - almost every window in the building was broken and afforded little protection from bad weather. The owners of the building (the Phoenix Trust) were reluctant to fix anything until they had a commitment from the community that the building would not be vandalised and this undertaking was not forthcoming. In any event, the University of Natal Community Project repaired the window in the student's office to provide at least a little more comfort for them.

The first year in Bhambayi after the elections was a difficult one. While the

student unit was welcomed by the leadership, individual community members obviously experienced many misgivings about the presence of social work students in the community. Having previously “abandoned” the community may also have contributed to this and the unit needed to re-establish its commitment to Bhambayi. Very few people approached the unit for assistance and attempts to form groups seemed doomed to failure. People would indicate polite interest but then simply not turn up for meetings. We later discovered that posters advertising meetings did not carry the leadership signatures (although they had given permission and were supportive of these meetings) and that people were thus afraid to come to the meetings. Sporadic outbreaks of violence and the continued maintenance of rigid political boundaries within Bhambayi also meant that people were afraid to be seen in particular areas. To begin with the student unit could only operate in the area surrounding the clinic.

How to establish (or re-establish) credibility and how to let people know what we could offer was thus a challenge. Wary of creating any expectations that we could not fulfil, we decided to engage in very low key needs assessment and relationship building activities. These included regular meetings with members of the committee in an attempt to try and understand the problems and difficulties facing people in Bhambayi and how best we could help. Discussions with the few women who came to the clinic to sew, and with a young man who “squatted” at the clinic and who was very keen to begin a literacy project also helped us to gain insight into the lives of people in Bhambayi. Unable to move freely within the area, the students also spent a great deal of time sitting outside the clinic and talking with passers-by.

A recurring theme that we heard when talking to people was that Bhambayi was a horrible place, and that there was not much that was positive about it. People

talked about how they would leave if they could - they seemed trapped and helpless to change their situation. It was clear that life in Bhambayi was very difficult and that many people experienced overwhelming feelings of hopelessness. People were tired and demoralised and saw little hope of a better future within Bhambayi. It was from this understanding of how people in Bhambayi saw themselves and how they constructed their perceptions of life in the informal settlement that a way of working in Bhambayi began to suggest itself.

A new beginning: The day the sun shone at Bhambayi

Clearly, any social work service or community development project would have to take into account that Bhambayi lacked a sense of community. While it was obvious (without any needs assessment!) that economic and infrastructure development were vital in Bhambayi, it was also clear that attention would have to be paid to peoples' non-material needs. It seemed that given our limited resources and time, the area in which we could most make a difference might be in helping people to develop a better sense of who they were and a better sense of community. We therefore decided to adopt a micro foundation approach to development (Coetzee, 1996). In contrast to much of the development literature that focuses on political, economic and social processes at a macro level, the micro foundation approach takes into account how individuals experience how these factors influence their daily lives. This approach is person-centered and holds as its basic assumption that all people value respect and want to be treated as worthy individuals. Development efforts should therefore help to satisfy peoples' needs for solidarity, friendship, leisure, creativity, joy and happiness and contribute to removing the dehumanising sense of meaninglessness (Coetzee, 1996).

Maybe we could help change the negative perceptions of living in Bhambayi, we reasoned, if we could get people together to have fun and so was born the idea of a "Fun Day". Fun and happiness seemed to be in short supply in Bhambayi. Working with a small group of interested community members, the Fun Day began to take shape. The students organised a jumping castle, a blow up toy made of strong plastic on which children can jump and play, for the children. We discovered that Bhambayi boasted several choirs who were only too pleased to be given an opportunity to perform, the women in the sewing group decided to put on a fashion show and friends and family of university staff and students were persuaded to help organise activities such as face painting for the children. Community members organised a sound system and "marshals" to ensure order. Two large companies donated traditional beer and soft drinks and a welfare organisation donated bread.

Having never done anything like this before, the students and I were nervous as the starting time for the function drew near and no-one arrived - even the community members who had worked with us to plan the day seemed to have disappeared. However, they slowly trickled in and about three hours after the starting time, the festivities began. This, we were to learn, was standard procedure for any community meeting in Bhambayi - functions never start on time and the crowd improves as the day goes on. The crowd grew and grew and all seemed to enjoy the activities. Many spectators joined in by providing impromptu skits, songs and comic shows with the result that the afternoon lasted much longer than we anticipated. The children shrieked and screamed and fought to get onto the jumping castle. One of the community helpers resorted to keeping them in check by whipping their legs - not a method we approved of but in the absence of being able to control them ourselves felt it best to say nothing.

Towards the end of the afternoon, an elderly man walked into Bhambayi from the main road. He was stooped and walked with a walking stick. Although his clothes were old, he was smart - collar, tie and jacket. He stopped and watched the proceedings. He then came up to me and asked "what is going on here?". As I explained, a broad smile lit up his withered old face. "Ah", he said, "today the sun shines at Bhambayi" and chuckling to himself he walked slowly away. The day had been worthwhile!

Fun days have now become a standard feature of the social work student's practice experience in Bhambayi. More recently, these days have included an educational element and these are discussed in the next section under community outreach programmes offered.

Programmes offered

Given the extent of the social problems in Bhambayi, it could be very easy to become overwhelmed by the sheer enormity of what needed to be done. It was therefore important to work in a focused manner. Taking into account the needs of the community, the amount of time that students are able to spend in Bhambayi and their limited knowledge, skills and experience, the unit now offers three programmes which correspond to the three main methods of social work. Each of these programmes has as its main aim the desire to help people to access the resources and develop the knowledge and skills they need to solve problems and improve their lives. These programmes are:

COUNSELLING AND REFERRAL PROGRAMME

This casework programme offers counselling and referral services to residents of Bhambayi as well as to residents of neighbouring areas who request it. The following table illustrates the number of clients and interviews that have been

held over the past five years.

Table 7: Number of clients seen and interviews held in Bhambayi

Year	No of clients	No of interviews
1999	75	123
1998	52	130
1997	50	126
1996	112	325
1995	21	32
TOTAL	310	736

(Source: Supervisor's reports, 1995 -2000)

Poverty is a major problem in Bhambayi with survey results suggesting that only 30 percent of adults in Bhambayi are employed with a further 24 percent describing themselves as self employed or employed only on a casual basis (Data Research Africa, 1995). The same survey also indicated that only six percent of households received transfers (for example, from family members in other parts of the country) or government grants. These figures may well now be out of date but do give some indication of the extent of the problem. It is therefore not surprising that the majority of requests for individual assistance are related to financial need.

Through individual counselling and referrals we believe that we are able to assist people access what is rightfully theirs in terms of government grants for the elderly, the disabled and young children. Grants in South Africa are a major

source of poverty alleviation (Ardington and Lund, 1995). Talking with people individually also provides opportunities to explore alternatives. Many people do not qualify for government assistance and helping them to understand the need to take responsibility for their own future forms an important aspect of our work. The student social workers have had some success in encouraging people to begin their own small businesses - one woman started buying and selling second hand clothes and became quite successful while another opened a small hairdressing salon in her house. In most cases, however, suggestions about self employment are met with polite disinterest.

Other problems requiring referrals and work with other organisations have included:

- assisting with school placements for disabled children
- assisting a disabled man to get his wheelchair repaired
- referring mentally ill patients for assessment and treatment at a specialised facility
- exploring placement options for a frail, elderly man
- assisting separated/divorced/single parents access legal services regarding maintenance and custody issues
- referring potential foster placements and child abuse cases to the local child welfare organisation and providing support and follow up to the families concerned
- assisting with arranging care for a family of five young children while the mother served a short term prison sentence

GROUP WORK PROGRAMME

This programme offers one permanent on-going service - the Children's Club - but also allows individual students who have an interest in a particular field to

offer specialised group work programmes. Each year different groups are offered and some examples include:

- teenage sexuality group
- parenting skills group
- women's empowerment group
- disability support group
- study skills groups for matric learners

The Children's Club, established in 1995 has been the most successful student project and was established in response to the total lack of facilities for primary school children in Bhambayi. A large proportion of the population of Bhambayi are children. An estimated 25% of the population is between 1 and 10 years of age and a further 20% is estimated to be between 10 and 20 years of age (Data Research Africa, 1995). More than a quarter of the children between six and 15 have no education, probably indicating these children are not at school (Data Research Africa, 1995). There is one creche in the area (which does not function adequately and has a history of conflict) and the nearest isiZulu medium primary schools are about a half hour's walk away, across a busy freeway. Some parents have opted to send their children to English medium schools in the neighbouring "Indian" suburb of Phoenix. However, higher school fees and the problem of language make this an option open to only a few.

Life for children in an informal settlement can often be unpredictable. Family relationships are often disrupted with one or both parents absent for periods of time as they seek work elsewhere or attend to family business in the rural areas.

Often children do not know when they will see the absent parent again. High mobility within informal settlements means that neighbours may not be permanent. In Bhambayi, for example, there has been a high rate of internal

movement- 43% of people have moved within the area directly as a result of violence while a further 10% have moved because of violence related incidents (Data Research Africa, 1995). Even one's home is not stable and permanent. Community structures that provide a sense of continuity and security are thus important.

The children's club meets once per week during term time and runs a holiday programme during the July school holidays. It uses the social group work method and is what Toseland and Rivas (1984:21) refer to as a "socialisation group". The main focus of such groups is on increasing communication and social skills, and on improving interpersonal relationships through programme activities.

The aims of the club are fourfold:

1. To provide a structured environment in which children can have fun. Structure is an important source of security, especially in an environment where instability is rife. The club aims to provide children with a sense of security - it is always held when it is supposed to be, even if attendance is poor. A similar format is always used for each meeting begins and ends with all the children and group leaders coming together to sing, to play some large group games and to share news. During the middle part of the session, the children are split into groups and each group is led by a student social worker. This gives the children an opportunity to belong to a small group and to be known and affirmed by a group leader. Such validation and affirmation are central empowerment strategies that can contribute to overcoming feelings of powerlessness, helplessness and low self esteem (Miley, O'Melia and du Bois, 1995). Activities in the small groups are designed around the childrens' developmental needs.

The small groups then all come together again for more report back and further large group activities. The session ends with a small snack - a sandwich or a couple of biscuits and juice. In addition, attempts are made to be as consistent as possible regarding discipline and acceptable standards of behaviour.

It is also important that the club be seen as fun. By including games and fun activities, children are exposed to new experiences and learn more about themselves and their world (Pringle, 1975). The children enjoy games and participate enthusiastically but those that include an element of competition become problematic as the children cheat and become disruptive. We therefore include non- competitive games and team games that require the children to co-operate rather than compete with each other. This also complements our micro foundational approach that community activities feed into helping people to feel better about themselves.

2. To provide a forum for the development of group communication skills in the context of relationships with peers and caring, stable adults. If children are to learn how to live harmoniously in a community, they need to experience positive, caring relationships within that community. Bhambayi has been severely traumatised by the divisions of the past. Children from all areas are welcome to attend although in reality most of the children still come from the ANC areas. This is another illustration of how the spatial organisation in Bhambayi continues to impact on services. In 1999, we tried to resolve this by running two groups, one in each of the ANC and IFP areas. However, this was not efficient in terms of the human resources available and students battled to complete their

other work.

The club seeks to provide children with the opportunity to relate to one another, as well as to stable caring adults through all the various activities. An attempt is made to acknowledge children personally - we tried inviting children who had celebrated a birthday to come forward so we could sing to them but found that children did not know when their birthdays were and would all come forward for the song! Small group activities allow for more intimate interaction and we have witnessed some positive relationships developing. A useful means of acknowledging childrens' efforts is to allow them at the end of the sessions to show the large group what they did in their small group - this may be a completed puzzle, a collage or a role play they had done. The children are generally most appreciative of each other and this part of the programme is usually accompanied by much clapping. This is yet another way in which the club seeks to validate the children.

Some children have also come to the club armed with iron pipes for "protection". We insist that these are left outside and constantly reassure the children that the adults who are present will protect and care for them.

3. To provide a forum for life skills development. Many of the children have low frustration tolerance levels and any real or perceived threat from another child results in fighting - physical and verbal. In a community where there has been, and still are, high levels of interpersonal violence this is not surprising. These incidents provide an ideal opportunity to teach the children conflict resolution skills in a very practical way. Some

children however do not respond positively to these attempts and we do on occasions have children marching off angrily when corrected. Individual children are thus counselled on various aspects of their behaviour and helped to deal with issues confronting them at school and at home. Most of all, however, individual counselling focuses on offering the children concerned support and understanding.

4. To provide opportunities for cognitive development and self expression: Craft activities provide important opportunities for children to learn colours, number concepts, hand eye co-ordination and many other skills. These activities are not the childrens' favourites and this is probably related to their low competency in these areas. We continue to include these activities as we believe they will in the long term help them in school. They do, however, enjoy stories and listen well. Television programmes are popular and the children's favourite video is the IsiZulu version of the Disney movie, The Lion King.

In general, the children enjoy activities that allow for self expression. Dances, songs and dramas are very popular and provide the children with opportunities to comment on their experiences and to a certain extent to learn problem solving skills as they work out role plays and mini concerts.

When the Children's Club started, it was anticipated that the parents would be invited to form a committee to assist with the club. Despite some initial enthusiasm, this has not materialised. Attempts to recruit volunteers have not been successful and a number of potential volunteers have indicated that unless payment for services was available, they would not participate. Low self

esteem, lack of organisational skills, lack of trust among themselves and a constant daily struggle to make ends meet means that many people find it difficult to come together to work on projects that benefit the whole community. Students placed in the student unit thus still take the major responsibility for co-ordinating the functions of the club.

Some mothers and grandmothers have become involved and have helped on special occasions and during the holiday programmes. They, for example, organised the refreshments and also at times helped with discipline. This however was a mixed blessing - the parents tend to use physical punishment (slapping across the back of the legs) whereas the students have favoured reasoning with the children and encouraging them to make conscious decisions to behave appropriately. Clearly much work still needs to be done in this area. Recently, some of the youth groups in Bhambayi have shown an interest in helping with the children's club and this avenue of linking young adults and children is being explored.

Over the years, we have noticed a marked improvement in the behaviour of the children who attend the club. At the beginning, problems around food were never ending. Children used to push each other and grab food and seemed unable to understand that there would be enough for everyone. This has been resolved and they now line up in an orderly fashion and the older ones help the little ones. For the first few years, we would never have considered taking them on an outing fearing that we would not be able to control them. This no longer applies - in recent years we have taken the children to the beach front (despite living in a sea-side city many of the children had never seen the sea before!), to the museum, the art gallery and to the public library and their behaviour has been very good.

The children's club has also provided community members with access to the students. Some parents (mothers in particular) have approached the student unit for assistance with personal problems since their children have been in the club. By being faithful to its commitment to the children's club, the student unit has increased its credibility within the area and has been able to reach more people.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH PROGRAMME

This programme consists of two sub-programmes - the community education programme and the community support and liaison programme.

The community education model of community work is used to help community members develop knowledge and insight about community needs, ways of meeting these needs, and helping them to develop the skills necessary to achieve this (Lombard, 1991). As mentioned earlier, these educational activities are incorporated into a Fun Day that has as an additional focus the meeting of peoples' recreational and social needs. Examples of community education projects that have been successful are:

- a community clean up day
- a community health day, which included a fun run and guest speakers
- a child abuse awareness day and a workshop for community leaders on this topic
- a Women's rights day (held on the Women's Day public holiday)
- a Human rights day (held on the Human Rights Day public holiday)

The community support and liaison programme acts as a resource for community based groups in Bhambayi. At different times, various groups have

asked for assistance with a number of aspects. These have included:

- accessing resources for funding for the creche and elderly people's group
- helping the primary health care workers society to access first aid training through the St John Ambulance Foundation
- organising a recording audition for a local music group (the audition was not successful but the group enjoyed the experience and were given valuable feedback by the record company)
- offering various training programmes for groups - roles of office bearers, how to write a constitution and funding proposals, how to complete forms for registration in terms of the Not for Profit Organisations Act, 1999.

THE CHALLENGES OF SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE IN BHAMBAYI

The social work student unit in Bhambayi has undoubtedly impacted positively on the lives of a number of people in Bhambayi - this is borne out by the warm welcome each group of students receives at the beginning of each year and the positive evaluations at the end of each year. However, working in Bhambayi has not been without its frustrations, challenges and failures. Analysing these provides useful insights into the nature of social work in informal settlements. Three areas have been particularly challenging - how to address poverty, a growing concern about the incidence of child abuse in Bhambayi and how to work with community leaders.

Addressing poverty

Quite clearly the major problem in Bhambayi is poverty. In keeping with South African social welfare policy which was described in Chapter Three, social work

is required to address poverty. One of the ways in which social workers are urged to address poverty is by establishing income generating groups. Attempts to establish such groups in Bhambayi have, however, failed dismally. Two examples of such attempts are now described.

THE SEWING GROUP

As mentioned previously, this group was started by the CMHP and was resuscitated when the social work students first arrived in Bhambayi. Throughout the violence, the group continued to “hobble” along with about five women faithfully attending meetings. They developed excellent sewing skills and won a number of prizes at shows (Gray and Simpson, 1997). While this was good for their self-esteem and self image, they never developed their activities into a profitable business concern. Money gained from selling their clothes was used for immediate needs and no money was ever set aside for the purchase of more material or repairs for machines. There were therefore long periods of time when the group could not function because they had no material or the machines needed repairs or servicing.

The group also was unable to attract new members and even individual clients who had approached the students for financial problems and who were encouraged to join the group did not. The problem appeared to be that the de facto leader of the group was not from Bhambayi but lived close by and was actually paid a small sum of money by the Phoenix Settlement Trust to keep the clinic building clean. She was therefore seen as an outsider to the majority of the community and it seems there may have been some jealousy associated with her.

During 1998, a social work student worked with the women to re-conceptualise

the group. They acknowledged that trying to develop into a sewing co-operative was a waste of time but still felt that they wanted to share their skills with the community. They decided that instead of expecting people to join the group in order to learn skills and have access to the machines, they would offer week long sewing courses (for free) and that people could then hire the machines for a small fee. They could then sew in their own time and at their own pace and work as individuals rather than as a co-operative. The money from the hire of the machines could then be used for buying material for the lessons, and for more machines, etc. This idea, however, was not acceptable to the community at large. They said that the machines had been donated to the community and that they were for their free use. No amount of motivation that the community could decide how to use the machines could persuade them differently. The idea therefore had to be abandoned.

At present, no sewing courses are taking place, only one of the original members comes to the clinic regularly to sew and nine sewing machines lie idle! A valuable resource is being wasted because people cannot agree on how to use them.

INCOME GENERATING ACTIVITIES AMONG THE YOUTH

At the beginning of 1996, community leaders expressed concern about the large numbers of unemployed youth (youth being defined in terms of the ANC definition of youth, that is, young adults between the ages of 18 and 35) in Bhambayi. Two social work students therefore undertook a participatory research project during which the needs of youth were identified. Members of two youth groups (one from the ANC and one from the IFP) collected data from 69 young adults. More than two thirds of the respondents thought that an income generating group would be a good idea and indicated that they would

like to be involved in such a group (Ransom, Poswa and van Rooyen, 1997). An interesting finding was on average they expected to earn about R800 per month with some saying they needed more than R1000 per month. They suggested a wide range of activities that could be turned into income generating activities - broom making, music, hairdressing, welding, and food production.

Given the active participation of the youth in this project, it seemed to have every potential for success. However, this was not to be. Repeated attempts by the students involved in the research to get a group together for preliminary planning simply never succeeded. They were at a loss to explain this at the time. However, in retrospect, a possible explanation might have been that several of the youth involved got temporary positions as census enumerators and were actually out of Bhambayi for a period. By the time the next group of students arrived the following year, the impetus had been lost and the leadership of the youth groups had changed.

Community leaders continued to express concern about youth (many of whom themselves fall into this age group) and in 2000, a student with a particular interest in this area, re-established contact with some of the youth. Although income generation remains a long term objective, short term objectives have revolved around bringing together the different youth organisations and groups of youth in Bhambayi - there are in fact a number of music groups, a church group as well as groups associated with the political parties. A youth forum has been created with a view to increasing co-operation between the groups. A joint concert has been put on with the proceeds from this being shared among the groups. The student is making a concerted effort to help the forum control money in a fair and equitable fashion - however problems have already been experienced. The treasurer lent the group's money to the wife of a local ANC

leader who had recently been released from prison on bail for murder charges. The community has been divided over support for him and the conflict surrounding this man then spilled over in to the group with some members being extremely angry about this. One member who had been instrumental in the formation of the group resigned. The future of the forum thus remains uncertain.

These two examples highlight several difficulties associated with the formation of income generating groups. One issue revolves around meeting immediate needs for survival. Many of the women who were involved in the sewing group had a number of dependents and it was unrealistic to expect that money would be saved when food, clothing, and school fees needed to be provided. Another issue revolves around the notions of community and group trust - it was also unrealistic to expect that people who had a history of conflictual relationships to come together and trust each other with a scarce resource, money. Unrealistic expectations such as earning a R1000 per month also account for the failure of the groups to become self-sufficient. These themes are taken up again in Chapter Seven when social workers working in informal settlements describe their experiences of trying to develop income generating groups.

Child sexual abuse: Growing concern

Given the high rate of child sexual abuse in South Africa and the role of poverty in this, we anticipated that child sexual abuse would be a problem in Bhambayi. However, the community has been slow to acknowledge this as a problem. The first incident was brought to our attention in 1996 when the mother of a 12 year old girl sought assistance after the child had been sexually abused by her father. The child was referred to hospital for a medical examination which was not carried out - the child and her mother were told to come back a week later. The father was furious that the child had reported the abuse and firstly,

physically assaulted her, before again brutally raping her. Attempts to obtain immediate assistance for the child were unsuccessful. The local police refused to come to the area saying they had no vehicle. An offer to fetch them in the university car was refused because "how would that look". The Child Protection Unit (a specialised police unit dealing with child abuse cases) were unable to send anyone out because "we have more than 400 such cases you know". The social workers at the government department were at a meeting and refused to take calls while the local private child welfare organisation refused to accept the case because it fell within the government department's jurisdiction (Simpson, 1997). Community members were incensed at the lack of action and a "community court" was convened to "try" the father who admitted his guilt. The man was sentenced to death but was saved by a community leader who appealed to the crowd to hand the man over to the police. This particular incident highlighted the unsympathetic response of the formal health, welfare and justice systems as detailed by Simpson (1997). The family lived in impoverished conditions far from resources but were expected to travel to the hospital for the medical examination that could have (and should have) been carried out immediately. The police and the social workers were unable to respond in an emergency and the result was very nearly the murder of the child's father by an incensed crowd.

The seriousness of the problem was again highlighted in 1999 when three young boys, aged between 9 and 11, who attended the children's club, admitted to having sexually abused a 4 year old girl. The boys, who had a good relationship with the student social workers were very open in their discussion of what had happened. The following excerpt from one of the interviews, illustrates just how early young boys begin to construct their identity as boys vis-a-vis girls who are seen as objects to be used for their pleasure. The boys knew that they

were hurting the girl but accepted it as their right to expect her to do what they wanted.

- Student: So tell me, why did you do it?*
- Boy: It felt nice.*
- Student: What do you mean, it felt nice?*
- Boy: Down there (pointing to his genitals).*
- Student: Was it nice for the girl?*
- Boy: No.*
- Student: How do you know she didn't like it?*
- Boy: She was crying and telling us it was sore.*
- Student: But you didn't stop?*
- Boy: No.*
- Student: Why not? You knew you were hurting her?*
- Boy: She is a girl.*
- Student: So..... ?*
- Boy: She must listen to me.*

Girls, it seems, are also socialised from an early age into accepting a role as a sexual partner. In an environment where poverty is rife, it would appear that they learn how to use this situation to their advantage. The following part of the interview shows how the boys chose a younger victim because an older girl would "charge" them for her services.

- Student: Do you do this with older girls, like girls your age?*
- Boy: No.*
- Student: Only with the younger girls?*
- Boy: Yes. The older ones want us to pay them too much. We have to buy them chocolates and sweets and we don't have enough money.*

The matter was dealt with by the local disciplinary committee made up of men. The boys were each given a beating by a community leader and each boy's mother had to pay the girl's mother R10.00. Sexually abusing a little girl was equivalent to one and a half loaves of bread and a litre of milk!

Given this intervention by the community, the committee felt it was not necessary to refer the case to the child protection unit and the girl's mother agreed not to press criminal charges. However, the students felt strongly that follow up counselling was required for both the girl and her mother, as well the boys and their mothers. The goal of counselling for the girl and her mother would be to help the child to deal with the trauma she had suffered and to help the mother put in place protective measures to ensure her daughter's safety. It was hoped that counselling would help the boys to understand that what they had done was wrong and to help the mothers develop better parenting skills to enable them to guide their sons as they approached adolescence and the challenges that this stage of development brings. This was discussed with all the parties concerned and the case was referred to a child welfare organisation. The boys' mothers, however, were furious at this action and refused to keep their appointments at the welfare organisation. They took out their anger on the girl's mother by verbally abusing her and throwing stones on the roof of her shack. Intimidated and victimised (again) the girl and her mother "disappeared" apparently to stay with relatives in another informal settlement.

After this, several other incidents came to light. One included a mother who was "selling" her 10 year old daughter to neighbours for R10-00 a time. It would appear that this was a case where the parent was using the child as a way of dealing with the problem of poverty. Another case involved a young girl who was sent to buy milk and was accosted on the way to the shop. In both cases,

the people concerned "disappeared" when attempts were made to follow up the cases.

A research project in 2000 examined the attitudes of community leaders towards child sexual abuse and revealed a lack of understanding about the seriousness of child sexual abuse. Issues around consent were problematic - for some respondents it was not abuse if the child consented to sexual intercourse no matter the age of the child. A number of respondents felt that the mothers were to blame for not protecting and supervising the children while children who wore scant clothing were "asking" for it. At no point did anyone place any responsibility for the problem onto men (Hadebe, 2000). Paradoxically, though, they proposed harsh punishments for men who sexually abused girls and some even suggested the death penalty should be re-instated to deal with the problem.

Concerns about how to intervene in child abuse cases were also expressed by social workers working in informal settlements and these are examined further in Chapter Seven. The problems posed by unsupportive systems, the lack of resources and the amount of ignorance and prejudice surrounding child abuse were issues of concern to the social workers.

Working with community leaders: "The saga of the television and video cassette recorder"

The discussion above points to some of the difficulties in working with community leaders and this particular issue has been a great challenge for us. Community leaders play a key role in any community development action (Weyers, 1997). They are representatives of the community and are in the best position to know the needs and opinions of the community and to activate them

to participate in community affairs. However, as indicated in the previous chapter, development projects may not be in the interests of all community leaders and this has serious implications for service provision.

As indicated in the previous section of this chapter, leadership in Bhambayi is vested in the Bhambayi Reconstruction and Development Committee. This committee had representatives from all sections of Bhambayi and its main purpose is to oversee development in the area. It has recently been legally constituted as a Section 22 company (a non profit making company) and it is now tasked with managing the housing subsidy for the development of formal housing, employing contractors and supervising the allocation of houses for residents of Bhambayi. However, the committee is also seen as the body that deals with social issues in the community and, at times, the functions of the committee become blurred. Different members of the committee have different priorities - some wanting to concentrate on housing and development and others seeming to be constantly side tracked by other issues. Membership of the committee also varies from time to time - people may leave Bhambayi for a period to work elsewhere and then return at a later stage while some people obtain permanent employment and are no longer able to devote the time and attention the committee requires.

Working with such a committee can be very frustrating and the following story "The saga of the television and video machine" clearly illustrates some of the problems facing students working in Bhambayi. Through a personal contact, I was introduced to a welfare organisation in Switzerland that showed an interest in funding the children's club. Following the correct procedure and true to the spirit of co-operation and community participation, a funding proposal was drawn up together with the BRDC and included with the proposal was a letter of

support from the community leaders. The outcome was a substantial donation specifically for the children of Bhambayi. Among other things, a television set and video machine were bought. The idea was that not only could children enjoy the TV but that community groups could use it for educational and fund raising purposes. It was felt that this would benefit the children in the long term.

At the time of the purchase, there was no secure building in Bhambayi and, concerned for their safety, the machines were kept at the University. However, once the clinic had been renovated and secured, they were brought to Bhambayi and were thus more easily accessible to those who could make use of them. The caretaker of the building undertook to control its use and to keep a record of who used it. However, this action caused great consternation among members of the BRDC because they had not expressly given permission for the TV to be kept at the clinic. The student unit was accused of breaching protocol and not accepting the authority of the local leadership.

At a subsequent meeting with the BRDC, we explained that keeping the television and video machine at the clinic building had seemed the only sensible option. We had not realised that a lack of consultation about what seemed to us a minor issue would lead to problems. We apologised for the breach of protocol and asked for advice on where to keep the TV and on what procedures should be used for its use. The committee members voted to keep it at the clinic! Projects run by the student unit, they agreed, would not need permission - any other group in the community wanting to use the TV would book it through the BRDC office.

The TV was then taken back to the clinic. However, a week later it was taken to the BRDC offices where we were told that community leaders were taking it

home for their own use and worse, charging the children to watch programmes! Another meeting with the community leaders in question was held and they denied charging children. We made it clear that this was not acceptable and they agreed. Evidently, the practice of using the TV continued and when a visitor from the funders came to visit, the children were very sullen and refused to sing for him "because he didn't give the TV to us, he gave it to the adults!" Despite denials, it appeared that certain committee members were using the TV as an income generating resource.

The issue eventually appeared to resolve itself and the TV was returned to the clinic. Several months later the issue surfaced again. A youth group had used the TV in a fund raising venture resulting in a letter of complaint from the BRDC asking who gave permission for the TV to be used. Another meeting was held to remind them that student unit projects did not need permission as per the original agreement. One committee member tried to deflect the issue by saying that the committee knew nothing about the project and had not given permission for the project. This was not true - the committee had been informed and had even told the student who to contact for the project. Fortunately, enough committee members were present to back up this story. Several days after this, several committee members complained that the students had not been introduced to them and they did not know students were in the community. This necessitated yet another meeting - this time we summoned them to a meeting - and pointed out that this was simply not true! The committee members then apologised and explained that, as a group, they were having internal problems – "we are still very young, some of us" said one member. "Young" in this sense referred both to the age of the committee members as well as to their lack of experience.

Part of the problem appears to be related to issues of power. Adulthood is a time of excitement, challenge, change and stress as individuals move towards achieving independence, productivity and intimacy (Berger, McBreen and Rifkin, 1996). Unable to find meaningful employment, many young adults in Bhambayi have little chance of developing a secure self- image through this channel. Serving on the committee is however a source of self-importance and power. Attending meetings and attending to community business provides them with a structure in their lives and helps them to feel important. People in the community look up to them for guidance and their power to allocate housing, and determine whether people can qualify for housing subsidies, places them in positions of authority. In this situation, social work students can be seen as a threat. Much the same age as many of the community leaders, students are seen to be superior because of their status as "university students". Fighting with students about the TV and where to keep it provided a safe mechanism for keeping the students in their place. Considerable tact and patience are called for in dealing with these types of situations.

Postscript: The saga finally ended several months ago when the TV and video machine were stolen from a locked office in the clinic. There being no sign of forced entry, it seems reasonable to assume that some young people who were staying with the caretaker (who keeps the keys for the office) were somehow involved. The community leaders were extremely angry with the caretaker of the clinic and summoned him to explain his lack of supervision. In their discussions with me about the matter, they very firmly placed all the blame on the caretaker and very subtly intimated that the TV would have been better left in their care. A cynical colleague suggested that one of the leaders might have stolen the TV in order to prove a point!

This section examined three specific issues that have been particularly challenging as far as social work in Bhambayi has been concerned. The complexity of issues surrounding poverty and child abuse were highlighted and the challenge of working with local leadership was described. The themes raised in this chapter are revisited in Chapters Eight and Nine.

CONCLUSION

This case study of Bhambayi made use of a number of sources of data to provide an in-depth analysis of one informal settlement. The unique characteristics of Bhambayi as they have been influenced by its history were examined. The implications of this for social work practice were described by highlighting some of the challenges facing social work students who work in the area.

This chapter provides the context for understanding the perceptions and opinions of community and group leaders from Bhambayi regarding the problems they experience and the role of social work in addressing these. The following chapter presents the results of the focus groups held in Bhambayi.

CHAPTER SIX

VOICES FROM BHAMBAYI: COMMUNITY LEADERS SPEAK

This chapter introduces, for the first time in the study, the voices of one set of research participants, the community leaders of Bhambayi. Three focus groups were held with community leaders in Bhambayi. Community leaders, as described in Chapter Two, were defined as anyone who played a leadership role in Bhambayi, whether it was as a member of the BRDC or any other group in the community. In this chapter, I examine their responses to questions about what the main problems in Bhambayi were and their opinions about social work and development.

To begin with, a profile of the community leaders is provided. This description of the community leaders provides the rationale for accepting them as “key informants” able to speak with authority about the conditions in Bhambayi. The chapter then examines the problems experienced by people in Bhambayi with which they felt social workers should assist. The perceptions of community leaders regarding the functions and roles of social workers in welfare and development in Bhambayi are discussed. A final section brings these threads together and analyses the implications of the findings for practice.

PROFILE OF COMMUNITY LEADERS

All the participants lived in Bhambayi, except for one man. This man had grown up in Bhambayi and spent most of his time at the Ghandi clinic where he acted as caretaker, cleaner and gardener. His home however, was at a nearby informal settlement. He is accepted by the residents of Bhambayi as “one of us”. The length of time participants had lived in Bhambayi varied. Two of the older males were among the original residents of the area having lived there all their lives. They were from the group of residents of Bhambayi referred to as

“landowners”. This group of people had historically owned the land they occupied but during the years of violence, many of them had lost their properties as squatters ousted them and took over their homes. They played an active role in the affairs of the Bhambayi Reconstruction and Development Committee and were determined to see peace return to the area. All the other participants had lived in Bhambayi for at least 6 years and were committed to development in the area. They had also experienced the violence first hand. One participant, Stanley, had been the ANC representative, who together with an IFP representative, had brokered the original peace treaty between the warring factions and had begun the process of peace building in the area. These two men had been honoured with a peace prize and sadly, soon thereafter the IFP member had been murdered in what appears to have been a politically motivated crime. Since the completion of the research study, Stanley has also sadly lost his life in a senseless assassination. All the research participants knew Bhambayi well and were committed to a future there despite the dangers and insecurities of life in Bhambayi.

An almost equal number of males and females participated in the study and there was an even spread of ages in each of the age categories. A wide range of possible views was therefore represented. The following table illustrates this.

Table 8: Age and gender profile of Bhambayi study participants

AGE	M	F	TOTAL
21-30	3	2	5
31-40	1	3	4
41-50	2	1	3
51-60	4	2	6
TOTAL	10	8	18

Participants were not asked their educational standard because of sensitivities around this issue. A number of people who participated in the study were illiterate and every effort was made not to embarrass anyone.

The participants were involved in a variety of community activities in Bhambayi as illustrated in the following table.

Table 9: Community involvement of study participants

NUMBER	TYPE OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT
11	Members of the Bhambayi Reconstruction and Development Committee, a popularly elected committee representing all sections of Bhambayi
5	Members of the ANC Women's League
5	Members of the Siyathutuga Women's Group, a sewing group
3	Members of the Zamani Women's Group, a sewing group
2	Members of the Primary Health Care Workers Society, a group of volunteers who provide care for the sick in the community
2	Landowners and community advisors.
2	Members of the ANC
2	Spiritual leaders – pastors of the 7th Day Adventist Church
1	Member of ANC Youth League
1	Crèche "mother"
1	Worker for home care project of Catholic archdiocese of Durban which provides home based care to people who are living with AIDS

(NOTE: Some community members were involved in more than one community activity.)

A DESCRIPTION OF TYPES OF PROBLEMS EXPERIENCED BY PEOPLE IN BHAMBAYI

Residents of Bhambayi identified a wide range of problems experienced in their community and there was considerable agreement across the three focus groups on what these problems were. To a large extent, they confirmed that the problems identified by students in the student unit were accurate and their stories also illustrated in more detail some of the issues identified in the literature in Chapter Four on informal settlements. While this was not unanticipated, the value of this aspect of the study was the description of the subjective experiences of residents in an informal settlement.

There were two main problems that impacted on nearly every aspect of life in Bhambayi - poverty and the legacy of violence in the area. Given the history of Bhambayi, as discussed in the previous chapter, this was not surprising. Problems related to family breakdown and the lack of resources in the area were also discussed at great length. A particularly interesting aspect of the problem identification was the notion that it was outsiders and newcomers to Bhambayi who were the problem. Each of these aspects is now examined.

Poverty

Participants all agreed that poverty was a major problem in Bhambayi. It was unanimously agreed that, "*People are too poor*". Lack of education, illiteracy and the lack of skills were identified as factors that contributed to unemployment. The consequences of this were serious. "*People are starving*", said one participant. Others explained that people often did not have sufficient food to eat and children went to school hungry. Children then performed poorly at school, developed negative attitudes towards school and became "drop-outs".

Not having food also impacted on the recovery of people who have

tuberculosis. The medication for this disease needs to be taken with food to prevent nausea and, because patients experienced the negative side effects of the medication, they defaulted. This in turn had serious public health consequences, as defaulters were more prone to developing an antibiotic resistant form of tuberculosis. According to some community leaders, some people with tuberculosis also refused to take their medication because they were afraid that if they got better they would lose their disability grants that for many families were the only source of income. However, short sighted this may be (without treatment the person will die and the family will be destitute), it seemed that being sick and having some income was preferable to being well and having no income.

Other health problems were experienced and asthma and chest infections were said to be common. Participants agreed that HIV/AIDS was becoming a problem but stated that it was still a disease about which people did not talk. One person explained it as follows:

"Lots of people have TB and AIDS, also sexually transmitted diseases. But they don't want to tell you. Only those with TB tell you and when they go to the clinic you find out they have AIDS."

As discussed in Chapter Four, the incidence of HIV and AIDS in South Africa is alarming and an estimated five million South Africans are currently living with HIV/AIDS. Poverty is an important co-factor in the aetiology of HIV/AIDS. It has been argued that AIDS follows the path of least resistance, and those marginalised in society, especially women and children are most vulnerable to infection (Sewpaul and Rollins, 1999). Bhambayi, with its socio-economic, political and cultural composition, is an extremely susceptible environment for the contraction of the disease.

One of the challenges facing those involved in trying to deal with this epidemic is the stigma that is attached to the condition. There are, for example, serious risks involved in disclosing one's HIV/AIDS status and it is not surprising that

people in Bhambayi are reluctant to talk about their status. In December 1998, a young woman by the name of Gugu Dlamini was assaulted by a group of youths after disclosing her HIV status (Sunday Times, 10 January 1999). This incident took place in a township near Bhambayi. Another newspaper report in January 1999, carried the story of a young woman who had gone into hiding after having disclosed that she was HIV positive (Sunday Tribune, 24 January 1999). Her mother reported that a group of armed men had come looking for her. They said she had disgraced the community by disclosing her HIV status. Writing about HIV/AIDS in the St Wendolin's district, Leclerc- Madlala (1999) reported that some of the men in this area explained that harassment of women who disclosed their status would continue because, among other things, they were ruining their boy-friends' reputations. Disclosure is not supported, and in fact, may place one's life at risk.

Another consequence of poverty according to the community leaders of Bhambayi was crime, "*All sorts of crime*". Stealing was said to be particularly rife. Examples were given of money, clothing and household goods being stolen from houses. One person had cabbages from his garden stolen and another had flour taken from her kitchen.

More serious however, was the prostitution of children. Participants knew of cases where mothers "sold" their children to men for sexual favours and a number of these cases had come to the attention of the student unit as described in the previous chapter. The payment could be as little as R10.00 but that amount was enough to feed the family for a short time. Dealing with cases such as these caused a number of dilemmas for community leaders and there was some debate about this during the focus groups. There was a feeling amongst some of them that because the mothers had given "permission", it did not constitute child sexual abuse and so the matter should not be reported to the police. These people were of the opinion that the perpetrator was not at fault because the mother had agreed – if the mother did not want the child to be involved in sexual activities, she should not "sell" her child, they argued.

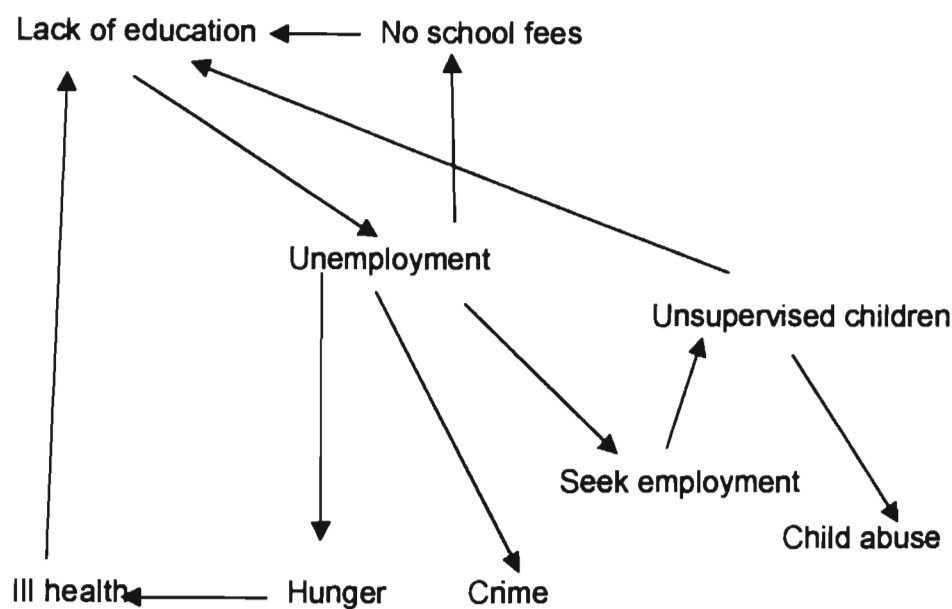
This argument placed the responsibility for preventing abuse on the mother and failed to take into account the underlying reasons why such incidents occurred. It also ignored the fact that it was men who provided the market and bought such sexual favours.

Other participants felt that these incidents did constitute child sexual abuse and that both the mother and the man concerned should be arrested. Others were then quick to point out that would only exacerbate the problem (poverty) that had caused the behaviour in the first place. Arresting the man would stop the supply of money and arresting the mother would leave the children destitute and a further burden on the community.

A further contributory factor to the high incidence of abuse in the area, that was also related to poverty, was that people in Bhambayi spent a lot of time looking for work and that sometimes this search extended to areas far away. This meant that children were often left unsupervised for long periods, often without food and reliant on neighbours for help. These children were vulnerable to abuse. It also led to resentment and conflict, as the neighbours, already battling to meet their own survival needs, did not know how long the parents would be away and how extensive their involvement in the care of children would be.

In chapter Four, the "deprivation trap" (Chambers, 1983) was described. The deprivation trap as experienced in Bhambayi can be illustrated as follows:

Figure 4: The deprivation trap as experienced in Bhambayi



Understanding how the various factors influence and are influenced by other factors helps to explain why it is difficult to address the problem of poverty. All too often, it is the symptoms, and not the root causes that are addressed. However, it is only by doing this, preferably with the people concerned, that strategies can be developed and priorities set for helping people to break this cycle and to begin the process of development (Burkey, 1993).

Conflict and violence

Community leaders commented that while political violence of the early 1990s had largely abated, violence continued to be a problem in Bhambayi. The political intolerance of the past still impacts on community relationships and contributes to family breakdown in the area. They explained it thus:

“Say an ANC person has a problem with an IFP person over a woman, then it becomes a political thing, but it’s a woman thing.”

The “woman thing” caused some hilarity in the group with both men and women laughing heartily. According to some participants, there is a shortage of men in Bhambayi and women can therefore “*pick and choose*” their partners. If there are any problems, they threaten to leave their partners saying they can get what they want from another man. This then causes the men to get angry with one another as one accuses the other of trying to entice away “his woman”. One community leader was quick to point out that problems also arose between the women over men and cited the case of two women quarrelling over a man which resulted in the one fatally stabbing the other. The man was then left with two sets of children (not all of them were his biological children) to care for – the orphans of the dead woman and the children of the woman who was arrested and imprisoned for the murder.

Taxi violence was also identified as a problem. Some months before the focus groups were held, a taxi owner from Bhambayi was shot dead, allegedly by someone from a rival taxi association. Community leaders explained that the taxi conflict impacted negatively on their lives. People from Bhambayi could only use Bhambayi taxis and this often meant long waiting periods as taxis only depart when they are full. What was frustrating for people in Bhambayi was the fact that the rival taxi association’s taxis go right past Bhambayi and are more frequent. It would often be more convenient, and in their interests, to use the other taxis but they were too afraid to do so and these taxis would not stop for them at Bhambayi.

Taxi violence is not unique to Bhambayi and outbreaks of violence occur along many of the main taxi routes in South Africa. Even as this is being written, a newspaper report detailed how a taxi owner and his brother were killed in a taxi related incident (Natal Mercury, 24.10.2001). Agreements such as the one that exists in Bhambayi that prescribe where taxis from different taxi associations may stop are an attempt to stem this violence. Taxi owners benefit from these agreements as they reduce competition and ensure each has access to a certain section of the commuter market. However, as the residents of

Bhambayi pointed out, commuters are inconvenienced.

With such high levels of conflict and violence, it was not surprising that community leaders pointed out that many people in Bhambayi were suffering from stress. Descriptions of irritability, anger outbursts and sleep disturbances seem to indicate the presence of post- traumatic stress disorder (Scott and Stradling, 1994) in this community. Examples of these descriptions included:

“People are very stressed. The violence in April (the taxi violence) caused stress. You can see it in their faces. People are short tempered.”

“People can’t sleep properly at night. They are scared and they have bad dreams.”

A further consequence of conflict and violence was that this impacted on and slowed down infrastructure development. To illustrate this, community leaders explained that a certain area around the clinic building had to be cleared for the development of the Phoenix Settlement. A group of workers drawn from all sections of Bhambayi, as per the labour agreement, was appointed to carry out this work. However, some residents of the section being cleared would not allow residents of the other section into their area. Contractors and workers were threatened with violence. They refused to continue and work stopped while negotiations and meetings took place to resolve this issue. This took nearly six months to resolve and during this time, no development work proceeded. The impact of violence on community development has been identified elsewhere in the literature as one of the factors hampering development. Mandizvidza (1998) pointed out that violence in informal settlements not only slowed down development but in some cases, also resulted in the destruction of property. This was also evident in Bhambayi as described in Chapter Five.

The effects of family breakdown

The breakdown of family structures and the failure of families to care for and socialise their children appropriately was identified as a major problem. Underlying much of the discussion around this issue was a longing for another era when young people respected their elders and when customs and traditions provided security and predictability regarding how relationships should be established and maintained. In order to understand this, it is important to consider traditional family structures in African society.

Patrilocality and patrilineality were the dominant features of African society prior to colonisation (Simkins, 1986). This meant that when a couple married, the woman left her family home and went to live with her husband. The marriage was formalised by the transfer of "*ilobolo*" (bridewealth) from the husband and his family to the woman's parents. Children of this union belonged to the husband's lineage. This meant that in the event of the husband dying, the nearest male relative assumed responsibility for the children. Formalised systems for the care and socialisation of children existed. Generally, in traditional African society the extended family was the ideal family type and according to van Vuuren (1997), the extended family could include extensions of the parent-child, husband -wife and sibling relationships. Nuclear families would occur where people did not have the resources to establish and maintain an extended family.

Urbanisation and the form of migratory labour that accompanied it had a major impact on African families (van Vuuren, 1997). Families were split as men sought work in urban areas and returned home to the rural areas perhaps only once per year. The form of the family has thus changed over the years. Steyn (1993) identified a total of 41 different types of family structures in South Africa and eventually simplified and condensed these to 15. While the nuclear family was found to be the most common form of family structure, it comprised only 39 percent of the total. Authors have noted the increase in the number of female

headed households and children born outside of marriage within African society (Steyn, 1993, van Vuuren, 1997, Preston -Whyte, 1993).

It was this problem of children being born outside of marriage that concerned residents of Bhambayi. One person explained it as follows:

"A big problem is that many people in Bhambayi are staying together as married couples, whereas they are not. This causes problems because many of them are young. They become pregnant and have children that they cannot take care of. Some of them have children from previous "marriages". Then the new "husband" or "wife" doesn't want to take care of them."

The whole question of children born outside of marriage is a complex one and Preston-Whyte (1993) pointed out that there were a number of reasons for non- marriage. In the first place, the costs of marriage are prohibitive. As explained above, marriage in African society is brought about through the payment of *ilobolo*. Traditionally, this was in the form of cattle, but to-day money is required. The amount can be as high as R10 000. For a young man living in an informal settlement, this amount is out of the question. A further difficulty arises when a pregnancy occurs before the "*ilobolo*" has been paid. The young man is then expected to pay "*inhlawulo*" (damages) and this too can amount to a substantial sum of money.

Additionally, there is peer pressure to engage in sexual relationships as part of normal love relationships between men and women. Pregnancy and the birth of a child is proof of the man's virility and the woman's fertility is highly prized. Marriage is thus often irrelevant in this context and in these circumstances, there is not much community pressure to avoid pregnancy (Preston-Whyte, 1993). Furthermore, Preston-Whyte and Zondi (1992) argued that in the face of limited life opportunities for the majority of African women and teenagers, the maternal role possible routes to adulthood and status. Under such circumstances, preventing a pregnancy may seem like an "irrational strategy"

(Preston-Whyte and Zondi, 1992:238).

Pregnant teenagers, according to the community leaders, were a particular problem. Loening (1992) described a number of problems facing adolescent mothers and their babies. These ranged from medical problems such as low birth weights and higher rates of infant and peri-natal deaths to socio-economic problems such as malnutrition, neglect and abuse. While community leaders in Bhambayi did not talk about health issues, they were very concerned about the neglect of these children. The mother's schooling was disrupted and she could not get a "proper" job or she went back to school to finish her schooling. She could thus not provide financially for her child who became the responsibility of either the maternal grandmother or other community members, all of whom were already overburdened with trying to survive.

There have also been changes in the arena of parent child relationships. There was an expectation that children should respect their parents and elders. Several participants complained that teenagers and young people, in particular, were undisciplined and showed no respect for adults. Disrespectful behaviour included not listening politely when spoken to, answering back in a cheeky manner and flirting openly with their boyfriends and girlfriends in front of adults. In her research into parent-child relationships within informal settlements, van Vuuren (1997) observed similar problems. One parent that she interviewed commented "if a parent has obedient children he/she must thank God because nowadays children are not obedient at all" (van Vuuren, 1997:211).

The lack of suitable role models for young people was also evident and community leaders commented that some parents did not set a good example for their children. Some parents were said to neglect their children because they themselves were abusing alcohol, dagga and mandrax. These substances were evidently freely available in Bhambayi:

"They use a home brewed spirit which they get from Amawoti (a

neighbouring informal settlement). This is cheap alcohol. It is dangerous to their health. Dagga is smuggled in from Lesotho and Transkei."

One illustration of this was the story of a woman whose teenage daughter was causing problems – truanting from school, staying away at night, smoking dagga and abusing alcohol. The woman was a major dagga trader in the area and spent many weeks away from home collecting supplies from Transkei. She seemed unable to accept any responsibility for the fact that her daughter was, what she described as, "uncontrollable". She had refused to pay school fees for the child saying she would not waste money on a child who was misbehaving and had threatened to evict her from the family home.

The lack of parental care and supervision was not unique to this particular case but was identified as a common problem, which, according to community members, led to several other problems. Some children were left to their own devices and went to neighbouring areas to beg. They sniffed glue and engaged in what community leaders described as "*deviant behaviour*". This included stealing, truanting from school and general disrespect for authority. These "*deviant*" children also negatively influenced other children in the settlement whose parents were battling to provide a good home for their children. Several residents felt that these parents then became very frustrated and that their lack of parenting skills sometimes led to excessive physical punishment. Like the parents in van Vuuren's study (1998), these parents felt unsupported in their attempts to teach their children certain values and norms. Some people observed that children today know their rights and threatened to report their parents to the authorities if they disciplined them physically. Parents, who were uneducated and lacking confidence in their own abilities as parents, felt powerless and scared to discipline their children at all and this led to a further break down in behaviour and family relationships.

While difficulties in parent child relationships are not unique to people living in informal settlements, the struggle for physical survival impacts severely on

these relationships. As already mentioned, parents may be absent for varying periods of time and children are left unsupervised. Even when parents are at home, discipline is a problem, especially for men. The status of men as the head of the family has been compromised and as van Vuuren (1997) pointed out, African men are in an unenviable position. They know that in terms of their cultural traditions, they are expected to be the providers but, in circumstances of poverty and unemployment, are unable to fulfil this role. This undermines their position in relation to their children and lowers their self-esteem. Children in these circumstances seem to have lost respect for their fathers.

The breakdown of family coping resources could also be seen in the lack of care for the elderly in the community. In traditional African society, elderly people were respected and revered and were cared for by the extended family or kinship group (Chikanda, 1987). In Bhambayi, some elderly people had been left without support networks. They had lost their possessions during the violence and had been deserted by their families. They lived alone and sadly, according to the community leaders, some even died alone. Some elderly people did have families but often these families took the elderly person's pension but then neglected the elderly person. One person told the story of an elderly woman who was bedridden and incontinent and was left on her own during the week while the family members worked. They arrived home at weekends and only then tended to her. Neighbours took care of her as best they could but were apparently angry and resentful that they were expected to take on this additional responsibility without any contribution from the family members.

Lack of resources

As pointed out in the previous chapters on informal settlements and Bhambayi, scarce resources and a lack of facilities are common features of informal settlements. Residents of Bhambayi also identified this as a problem and it was access to resources that was most problematic. There are no primary

schools in Bhambayi and children have to walk a considerable distance to schools. To access these schools, they have to cross a main highway. Although robots have recently been installed at the entrance to Bhambayi, crossing the main road remains dangerous and a number of accidents have occurred at this crossing. The nearest police station and clinic are also some distance away (also across the main road) and difficult to access in emergencies. The roads in Bhambayi are still in poor condition and ambulances and fire engines cannot easily get to where they may be needed. One woman who is involved in primary health care activities explained how they get sick people to hospital and one can only imagine the humiliation for the person involved:

"We have to put them in a wheel barrow and then push them to the main road and then wait there for the ambulance to come and fetch them."

Disabled people in Bhambayi also suffered because of the lack of resources and facilities for them. People in wheelchairs had a particularly difficult time moving around the area, as the dirt roads were rocky and hard to negotiate. The wheels of wheelchairs often broke and because people had little disposal cash, they were often not fixed. This then meant that these people were housebound and a burden on their families. Attitudes towards mentally ill and mentally disabled people were generally not positive - these people were mocked and teased and in some cases physically abused by their families and neighbours. One story was told of a mentally disturbed man who was kept a virtual prisoner in a shack and was fed through the bars of a window. It appeared that he often became violent and that everyone was too scared to approach him.

It was particularly interesting to note what community leaders did NOT include in their list of poor resources. There are only three water stands in Bhambayi, there is no sewage system, refuse removal is sporadic, and there are no public telephones. There are no nearby banking or postal services. None of these was mentioned as a problem. Later on in the discussion, it became apparent

that, in their opinion, social work's domain did not include infrastructure development. This being a social work research project, they did not consider it necessary to talk about problems that were not associated with social work.

"Its not us - its them!"

It was interesting to note, that while acknowledging all the problems in Bhambayi, several community leaders were adamant that:

"We are not the problem; they come from outside - its not us, its them".

It seemed that these participants were keen to present Bhambayi in a positive light. Most people in Bhambayi were, they said, normal, law-abiding people who wanted to develop the area. The problems were with the new arrivals to the area. One woman explained:

"They think they can get work and they come and stay with friends. But also they are the naughty ones who run away from home in the rural areas and come to the city. These are the ones who cause problems. The girls get pregnant and can't look after their babies. They have no Identity documents so they can't access the child support grant. They won't get ID's because they need proof of birth and must therefore return to their homes to get these documents/affidavits. It all becomes a vicious circle because they then become prostitutes or get involved in illegal activities like the dagga trade."

The need to impress upon me that most people in Bhambayi were normal, ordinary people and that it was outsiders and newcomers to Bhambayi who caused problems, and not the established residents, can be seen as an attempt by residents to construct a new image for Bhambayi. Bhambayi, with its history of conflict and violence, has had a fair amount of negative publicity of which the community is aware. As explained in Chapter Five, many residents told us during our early days in Bhambayi that they would leave if they could but felt they had no alternate options open to them. By seeing themselves as

normal and ordinary, they are beginning to develop a sense of identity and pride in who they are and this augers well for the future.

A danger, however, exists in creating a “them” and “us” mentality and the possibility of a different type of conflict exists. Instead of conflict being between the political parties, it could well develop between the more established and the newer residents of the area. The problem of xenophobia is beginning to receive attention in South Africa and there have been reports of residents of an informal settlement in the Gauteng region burning down the shacks of Zimbabwean nationals (Daily News, 24 October 2001). Much of this conflict appears related to scarce resources and complaints that foreigners, instead of local people, are being employed. The positive aspects of developing a sense of community, as in the case of Bhambayi, could be negated if this means that newcomers cannot be accommodated.

In this section, I have presented the perceptions of community leaders in Bhambayi regarding problems in their community. This, together with the information presented in Chapters Four and Five, presents a composite picture of the problems facing residents of informal settlements.

RESPONSES TO PROBLEMS IN THE COMMUNITY

This section, which examines the ways in which problems can be addressed and the possible roles of social workers in informal settlements, continues the discussion that began in Chapter Four. In that chapter, the literature regarding social work in informal settlements was introduced. In the following chapter, Chapter Five, examples of social work practice in Bhambayi were described. This section first of all examines existing support structures within the community and then goes on to examine the community leaders’ perceptions about what social is and what the role of social workers in an informal

settlement should be.

Helpers in the community

The isolation felt by residents also expressed itself in the difficulty they had in identifying who helped them in times of trouble. One group responded to the question “who helps people with problems” with silence while another group began with “*Nobody, we are on our own*”. Only when challenged to explore whether this was actually the case, were they able to begin identifying helping structures within Bhambayi thus reflecting the value of dialogue and reflection.

COMMUNITY LEADERS

They themselves, the community leaders, provided help for people with problems. They tried to deal with conflict and were particularly involved in organising housing and development in the area. The BRDC had been registered as a Section 22 company and was responsible for handling the government housing subsidy for the development project. They were able to explain to people what they needed to apply for housing and had organised for Home Affairs to come to the area so that people could apply for birth certificates and identity documents.

CHURCH LEADERS

There was some disagreement about the role of church leaders in the community. Some participants felt that church leaders were helpful as they prayed for people and offered support and counselling when people were experiencing problems. One group included two church representatives and they explained that they ran a Sunday School and contributed to the moral development of children. This was particularly important, they felt, because of the crime, violence and immorality in the area. Several people agreed with them commenting that children needed to be exposed to alternatives. Others, and the group held at the BRDC offices in particular, were more cynical about

the role of church leaders saying they only came when someone needed to be buried so that they could get money for their services. Some people felt that there were community leaders and church leaders who could not be trusted and that instead of solving problems they contributed to the problems! They used the community for their own purposes and did not have the interests of the community at heart.

NEIGHBOURS

Neighbours were seen to be an important source of support. As already mentioned, they were often called on to look after children whose parents were away. Neighbours also took care of sick people as far as they could. The importance of friendship ties in Bhambayi was illustrated by the following example. During the reconstruction of the Ghandi Settlement, some people had to be moved and were offered new homes in a nearby housing development scheme. However a number of them refused to move saying they would be isolated from their friends.

“PEOPLE FROM OUTSIDE”

People from “outside” also provided help. The university social work students, the KwaZulu Natal Project for Survivors of Violence and the Catholic Archdiocese of Durban home-based care programme were identified as providing useful services to the people in Bhambayi. The “*Inanda Welfare*” (a child welfare organisation) and the “*Newtown A Welfare*” (the government department of Welfare is situated in this section of Inanda) also provided services.

There were however some complaints about these services. The social work students were only there for nine months of the year and every year they had to get used to a new group of students. Some students were better than others and they never knew what to expect. The Survivors of Violence workers came and went – they would start a project, money would run out and then they would disappear until they got funding again. The home based care

programme was necessary, they felt, but it caused problems because some people got to go for training and the community was not consulted about who these people should be. As it happened, they did not approve of some of the people who were trained because they were not residents of Bhambayi. The “welfare social workers” seldom kept appointments and community leaders said they did not really know what they did. One person said:

“When someone has a problem, they are supposed to help but I don’t know. They don’t seem to help very much!”

SOCIAL WORK IN AN INFORMAL SETTLEMENT

Participants in the focus groups were asked to talk about their understanding of social work and what social workers should do. As community leaders or leaders of community based groups, all the participants had had some exposure to social workers and social work services.

Roles of social workers

Research participants were able to identify a number of things that social workers should do in informal settlements. Social workers should offer counselling with respect to family problems, conflict and problems with children. Giving advice was seen to be part of this and advice should, according to the participants, focus on how to deal with problems and how to get the help one needs. Social workers could also refer people to resources especially regarding pensions and grants, legal advice and when there is a special need (like a mentally disabled child).

Social workers should also help people to start projects such as market gardens and sewing groups, as well as clubs for children and the youth. They should run groups such as life skills groups and groups that teach practical skills, like how to run a committee, how to make patch work quilts, and how to

do a needs assessment. The mention of patch-work quilts was interesting. A student social worker had had a special interest in quilting and had taught a group of women some quilting techniques. This had obviously made an impression on the women concerned and had been a positive experience for them. It has thus become part of this community's understanding of what social workers should do.

“Social workers are daughters of the government”

This very telling comment from one of the participants provides a clue regarding how residents of Bhambayi perceive social workers. First of all, social workers are described as female. Residents of Bhambayi do know that there are male social workers as male students have undertaken placements at Bhambayi. However, females have always been the majority within the student unit and in the profession generally. Secondly, social workers are described as “daughters”. Within traditional Zulu culture daughters have less power than sons and referring to social workers in this way reflects that social workers are not seen to be as powerful as men. Thirdly, they are daughters of the “government”. This seems to indicate that social workers are seen as allied to the government and thus responsible for carrying out government instructions. While perhaps not as powerful as “sons” of the government, social workers are certainly seen as more powerful than for example, “daughters of Bhambayi” or as “daughters of the university”. The community's notion of “government” also needs to be taken into account if one is to understand what participants were saying. For many, the election promises and the rhetoric of the African National Congress are government policy. Social workers might well be carrying out government instructions (for example, only children under seven are eligible for the child care grant) but they are not implementing the election promises of a better life for all. When the community places such expectations on social workers, they are bound to be disappointed in the lack of tangible ways in which social workers affect their lives.

“Welfare” and “development”

Traditionally, social work had been associated with the provision of welfare and in some quarters, social workers are still referred to as “welfare workers”. However, the White Paper for Welfare (1997) clearly advocated a developmental approach to welfare. I wondered how community members defined these terms and whether their understanding of these might be a factor in their expectations of what social workers should do.

The following table provides a summary of the main differences between “welfare” and “development” as defined by community members.

Table 10: Differences between “welfare” and “development”

WELFARE deals with:	DEVELOPMENT deals with:
Free food	Houses
Clothing	Parks
School fees	Recreational facilities
Maintenance grants/pensions	Roads
Skills training – Sewing skills, life skills	Water
Help with access to medical care	Clean environment
Help with family problems	Skills training - building, plumbing, literacy, life skills
Help with bringing up your children	Education - about problems, resources available
	Projects - sewing groups, market stalls
	Develop people's minds - help them become confident

Very clearly, material aid was seen as a function of welfare and social workers were expected to provide welfare. Material help included food, clothing and money. In one group, mention of these aspects was greeted with much mirth. This excerpt from a focus group illustrates the thinking:

Researcher: I don't understand. Why is this funny?

Group: (even more hearty laughter!)

Researcher: (Looking and feeling puzzled)..... Tell me...?

Group member: We know we can't get these things.....

Group member:but it is nice to demand them.....

Group: (more laughter)

Researcher: So you know that this is unrealistic but you still hope that welfare might be able to help you in this way?

Group member: Yes - things are very hard for us and it would be nice if welfare could help us.

Researcher: So who is welfare?

Group member: You people.

Residents therefore understood that social workers were not in a position to offer much in the way of material aid but still felt that this should be part of their work. While the social work student unit and the KwaZulu- Natal Survivors of Violence have both at times, provided limited material aid in Bhambayi, many requests for assistance are turned down because of a lack of resources. In discussing this further, I pointed out, in general terms, some of the problems that had been experienced in the past when material aid was offered. For example, if you have a limited supply of clothes how do you decide who should get and who shouldn't? If you give food parcels, do you only give a certain number and then stop or do you carry on indefinitely and what happens to the family when you stop giving food? Members in the groups pointed out that they knew these were the problems and that social workers and welfare organisations did not have resources to offer this kind of help. One solution would be for the government to provide better pensions and assistance for families in need and that social workers should do something positive to influence government. Material need was a very real need and if social workers were committed to helping people, they should do something about this problem. Although they did not use the word "advocacy", they were in fact arguing that social workers should adopt a far more active role in accessing

resources and advocating on their behalf.

In response to questions about the role of social workers in development, participants did not believe that social workers should be involved in infrastructure development. They pointed out that there are other people, such as town planners, architects and engineers, who can do this. Social workers, they said, should concentrate on dealing with social problems and the “development” of people and it was in this respect that welfare and development shared common features. Educating people about how to deal with problems, helping people to become more confident of themselves and starting group projects were seen as ways in which social workers could be involved in development functions. One person added that social workers in informal settlements should be a “*little bit*” involved in infrastructure development issues, “*just so that she knows what is going on!*” In other words, being involved in infrastructure development would help the social worker – not that the social worker could help infrastructure development.

This understanding of the role of social work in welfare and development is clearly a reflection of their experience in Bhambayi. The BRDC has been fortunate enough to have had experienced and skilled consultants assisting them with development issues. These have included architects and town planners who have provided expert input on planning the development of roads, water and sewage pipes, and the building of houses. Social workers and social work students have not been involved in these issues. There was however an understanding that social workers can assist with the development of people by helping them to obtain skills and greater confidence in themselves. This, community leaders felt, would contribute to the overall development of Bhambayi.

The ideal social work service

Participants were asked to describe the ideal social work service in Bhambayi.

They enjoyed answering this question and had some very definite ideas about what they wanted.

Participants agreed that social workers should have particular personality traits. They described their ideal social worker as caring and tolerant, down to earth and able to understand people. One person said, *"She should not be high class and think she is better than everyone else"*. Another person said that the social worker should be able to communicate well with everyone and should not have any favourites. Another suggested that the social worker be a *"real"* person and she thought it would be helpful if the social worker introduced her family to the community. It was important, a number of participants felt, for the social worker to have good morals.

The description of a social worker as a "real person" echoed Howe's (1993:22) description of good therapists as "real people". For Howe, such therapists have their own personality, a sense of humour and a recognisable character. Person-centred counselling refers to this quality as "congruence" or "genuineness". Rogers (1967 cited in Corey, 1977), the founder of person-centred therapy identified three qualities that were essential for the success of the therapeutic encounter. These were genuineness, unconditional positive regard and empathy with the most important of these being genuineness. Social workers working in communities such as Bhambayi are not only therapists but work with the community at many levels. It was clear from what community leaders were saying that it was important to be "real" in the relationships that they establish and that good inter-personal skills were essential.

Most participants felt that it did not matter whether the social worker was male or female but a number felt that a female social worker would be better. This was because: *"More females have problems in this community and they will feel better speaking to person of the same sex"*. It is true that more women than men use the social work service in Bhambayi. However, the reasoning

that more women than men have problems is suspect. In a society where men are expected to be strong it is unlikely that they will admit to problems by openly consulting a social work student. An example from my own experience in Bhambayi illustrates this. A community leader asked for my assistance with a personal problem but was at great pains to tell his colleagues on the BRDC (in my presence) that he was discussing community affairs with me. In addition, by approaching me, and not a student, he was able to maintain his reputation in the community.

Female social workers were expected to dress respectably and it was pointed out that many people are offended by what they described as "*modern fashions*". "Modern fashions" included short skirts and shorts and blouses that did not cover the person's shoulders. One person suggested that the social worker should not even wear make up but others in the group disagreed, saying that, "*a little would be okay*". That women were expected to conform to a certain dress code was of concern. Taken together with other comments about the role of women in protecting children from abuse, and women having more problems than men points to patriarchal attitudes that have implications for practice. Community projects that reinforce womens' traditional roles such as skills groups for young mothers or primary health care groups would be acceptable. However, one wonders how community leaders would feel about women's empowerment groups which might encourage women to explore new ways of relating to men. This aspect is further discussed in Chapter Eight when a social worker describes her work with a group of abused women and the responses of men to this group.

Race did not seem to be an issue and most participants said that they had no preference in this respect. They did however feel that it would be more helpful for the social worker to speak isiZulu reasonably well as this would make communication easier.

There seemed to be a certain prestige attached to being a social worker and

participants felt that social workers should have working conditions that reflect this. Apart from clean toilets and lights that work, their offices should be well equipped with computers, telephones, fax machines and photocopiers and they should have a car. They suggested very generous working hours, 8h30 to 14h00 or 9h00 to 15h00. Social workers would however be expected to attend community meetings on weekends. This would mean time away from their families and thus the early finishing time during the week.

Social workers should have a programme and everyone in the community should know that s/he is available in the office on certain days and that on other days the social worker will be doing what some participants referred to as "*foot patrols*" (visiting people in the community, talking to people at the taps and near the river and generally being visible in the community). Having such a programme, they felt would serve two purposes - one, it would make the social worker accessible to everyone and two, it would provide a measure of security because everyone would know who this person walking around was. Regarding security, participants felt that the community and the community structures should look after the social worker.

In summary, community leaders in Bhambayi had definite ideas about how social workers should act and what sort of issues they should address. Social workers were required to have certain personal characteristics – they were to be caring, understanding people who could relate well to all people. They were to behave with decorum and were to be accountable for their actions. They should assist with material aid and help people with their problems.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I have presented the findings of one aspect of the study, that is, the perceptions of community leaders in Bhambayi regarding the problems their community face and the role of social work in addressing these problems.

In the next chapter, I go on to examine how social workers who work in a variety of informal settlements construct the notion of social work.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE VARIED NATURE OF SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE IN INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS

One of the main aims of this research study was to explore the perceptions of social workers regarding the nature of social work in informal settlements. In Chapter Three, the purpose, functions and methods of social work were described and particular attention was paid to how the practice of social work has been influenced by the context in which it finds itself. The following chapters, Chapters Four, Five and Six, provided a composite picture of informal settlements and the problems and challenges facing people who live in these communities. Some examples of social work in such informal settlements were provided and community leaders in Bhambayi described their perceptions of social work. In this chapter, the perceptions of social workers are examined.

The chapter begins by introducing the social workers who participated in this study. They are described in terms of their gender and race, as well as their years of experience as social workers in general and as social workers in informal settlements. Thereafter, their field of employment, the types of problems they dealt with and the methods of social work they employed are briefly described.

Three social workers then tell their stories. These narratives were specially chosen to illustrate the varied nature of social work practice in informal settlements. They also provide insight into how these social workers constructed the notion of social work and how this influenced how they approached their work.

The final part of the chapter concentrates on social work's response to two main issues. All the evidence presented so far points to the fact that poverty is a major problem facing people living in informal settlements. Given that

social work's historical mission is to address poverty and that the present welfare policy in South Africa identifies poverty as a priority, it was important to examine how social workers were addressing this issue in the course of their work. Caring for the vulnerable – children, the disabled, and the elderly – has also always been a major focus of social work and this aspect is examined in this section.

INTRODUCING THE SOCIAL WORKERS

A total of 22 social workers were interviewed as part of this study. These social workers worked in a total of 44 informal settlements in the greater Durban region. This section begins with a brief profile of each of the social workers and then describes their characteristics in terms of gender, race, experience and place of work.

Profile of social workers

The following brief profiles of the social workers provide background information about the social workers. Fictitious names have been used to protect their identity. As pointed out in Chapter Two, many of the social workers who participated in this study know each other and can probably be identified by their colleagues. For this reason, the place of employment and field in which they worked is not given in the profiles.

NOMBUSO

Nombuso is in her twenties and has five years experience as a social worker, two of these in informal settlements. She has worked for the same organisation since graduation. In addition to her degree in social work, she also has a post-graduate diploma in personnel management. Nombuso is primarily a caseworker but also runs group and community work programmes. She has clients in eight informal settlements.

VELAPHI

Velaphi is in his twenties and has four years experience as a social worker. He worked for one organisation for one year, before joining his present employers. Since being at his present organisation he has mainly worked in informal settlements. Velaphi does counselling and runs life skills groups in five informal settlements.

FIKILE

Fikile is in her twenties and has been a social worker for three years. She has worked at the same place since graduation and for the past 18 months has worked in informal settlements. Fikile is primarily a caseworker and works in two informal settlements.

JENNY

Jenny is also in her twenties and like Fikile has been a social worker for three years. She has also worked in informal settlements for the past 18 months. Jenny does casework, group work and community work and works in one informal settlement only.

CHRISTINE

Christine is in her forties and has been a social worker for 19 years. For the past eight years she has worked in informal settlements. Christine has a diploma in adult education and a master's degree in social work. She is a community worker and does no individual work at all. She works in two large areas which encompass a number of smaller informal settlements within them.

BUYI

Buyi is in her twenties and qualified four years ago. She has a post graduate diploma in personnel management which she completed after completing her social work degree. Buyi has two and half years experience in informal settlements and works mainly as a caseworker in four informal settlements.

PAM

Pam is in her twenties and qualified as a social worker five years ago. She worked in England for a short period and has been working in informal settlements for three and a half years. She is mainly a caseworker but also runs group and community programmes in three informal settlements.

BEN

Ben is in his thirties and has been a social worker for 14 years. He has held a number of social work positions in different welfare organisations. For the past eight years, he has worked in informal settlements. In his present position, he does only community work, in one large informal settlement.

GEETHA

Geetha is in her thirties and has 10 years experience as a social worker. She described herself as a community worker and works in three informal settlements. She has three years experience in these settlements.

GRETA

Greta is in her thirties and qualified as a social worker six years ago. She has social work experience in Europe as well as in South Africa. For the past year she has been working in four informal settlements as a community worker.

RESHMA

Reshma is in her forties and has been a social worker for 11 years. She has five years experience as a social worker in informal settlements and at present is a community worker in two settlements. She assists with casework in emergencies only.

AMEENA

Ameena is in her twenties and qualified as a social worker three years ago. Six months after starting work as a social worker, she transferred to a community work post and has worked in two informal settlements since then.

NOKULUNGA

Nokulunga, in her twenties, was the youngest graduate in this sample having qualified two years previously. She has worked in five small, closely connected informal settlements for the past 12 months. She does mostly community work but assists the caseworker in the area when necessary.

MICHELE

Michele is in her forties and was the most experienced social worker in this sample with 22 years experience at a number of welfare organisations. For the past eight years, she has worked as a community worker in two informal settlements.

NOKWAZI

Nokwazi is in her twenties and although she qualified three years previously she has 11 months experience as a social worker, all of which were in informal settlements. She described herself as primarily a caseworker who also did some group work and community work, and worked in three informal settlements.

THANDI

Thandi is in her twenties and completed her degree four years ago. For the past two years, she has worked in six informal settlements, mainly as a caseworker. She also ran a number of community work programmes.

NQOBILE

Nqobile is in her thirties and completed a community development diploma before studying to be a social worker. She has completed her degree four years previously and for the past two years had been working in three informal settlements mainly as a caseworker.

ANDREA

Andrea, in her twenties, had been qualified for six years and had four and a half years experience in informal settlements. She worked as a community worker in two such settlements.

SHERYL

Sheryl is in her twenties and had finished her social work studies six years previously. For the past four years, she worked as a community worker in five informal settlements.

ZANELE

Zanele, in her thirties, had eight years experience as a social worker and had recently joined her present organisation. She had six months experience of working in informal settlements and worked in five settlements, mainly as a community worker.

KRISHNI

Krishni is in her thirties and had 11 years experience as a social worker. She had been working in informal settlements for five years and worked as a community worker in six informal settlements.

PAUL

Paul, in his thirties, has eight years experience as a social worker and has always worked as a community worker in informal settlements. Prior to qualifying as a social worker, Paul was involved in community based activities in informal settlements and has been involved in informal settlements for 12 years in total. At present, he works in three informal settlements.

Gender and race

The following table summarises the gender and race of the social workers who participated in the study.

Table 11: Race and gender of social workers

RACE	GENDER		TOTAL
	MALE	FEMALE	
African	1	9	10
Indian	1	7	8
White	1	3	4
TOTAL	3	19	22

That the sample consisted of more females than males was not surprising. Social work is overwhelmingly a female dominated profession. Males made up 13,6% of the total number of social workers who participated in this study. This figure is more than the national average for the country where males make up 10% of the total but less than the KwaZulu-Natal figures where males make up 23,3% of the total number of social workers (South African Council for Social Service Professions, personal communication, 11.07.01)

The residents of informal settlements are overwhelmingly African. In contrast, just over half (54,5%) of the social workers who participated in this study were not African. There has been some debate in the literature about whether social workers from one culture can truly understand the life world of people from another culture. For many South African social workers, this view is reminiscent of the apartheid era when this argument was used as an excuse to not offer social work services to people of colour. It has been argued that the ability to relate to a wide range of people and to work in a culturally sensitive way is more important than the cultural or racial background of a person. Some of the experiences of the social workers as

they related to issues of race, language and culture are discussed in the following chapter.

Experience of social workers

Fifty percent of the social workers who participated in this study had five or less years experience as a social worker. The least experienced social worker had been qualified for two years, while the most experienced social worker had more than 20 years experience. Table 12 illustrates this clearly.

**Table 12 : Number of years experience as
a social worker**

NUMBER OF YEARS EXP AS A SOCIAL WORKER	NUMBER OF SOCIAL WORKERS
0-5	11
6-10	6
11-15	3
16-20	1
More than 20	1
TOTAL	22

While none of the social workers were newly qualified social workers, their experience in informal settlements, for the most part, was limited. Eighteen social workers (81,8%) had five or less years experience in informal settlements. As discussed in Chapter Three, social work services in South Africa have not always reached those most in need and for many years, informal settlements were ignored. The fact that services to informal settlements are relatively recent is illustrated in the following table:

Table 13: Years experience in informal settlements

NUMBER OF YEARS EXP IN INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS	NUMBER OF SOCIAL WORKERS
Less than 1	2
1	4
2	4
3	4
4	2
5	2
8	4
TOTAL	22

The four social workers who had eight years experience had all worked in informal settlements in the period prior to 1994 and prior to the adoption of the social development approach to welfare in South Africa. Interestingly, none of these social workers were African indicating that, despite the restrictions on welfare described in Chapter Three, some welfare organisations and social workers did find ways to reach the most needy and worked across racial barriers.

Field of service and types of problems

Thirteen social workers worked in the child welfare field, five social workers worked in the field of caring for the elderly, three social workers were in the field of health care, and one social worker worked for a specialised organisation dealing with trauma and violence.

All of these social workers said that the main problem they confronted in informal settlements was the unresponsive environment in which people lived. Chapters Four and Five have already highlighted the many ways in which informal settlements are unresponsive environments and not surprisingly, social workers described the context in which they worked as characterised by the following types of problems:

HIGH RATES OF UNEMPLOYMENT

This resulted in people being unable to satisfy their basic needs for food and adequate shelter. Material need was a major problem facing most of the clients with whom social workers worked.

LACK OF RESOURCES

Informal settlements in which social workers worked varied in the extent to which resources were available. Most were electrified but water supply was still problematic in many and was supplied via communal taps. Some informal settlements had clinics and libraries while in others there were no facilities at all. In some informal settlements, formal housing was being built while in others, no such development had yet taken place. In recent years, considerable development has been taking place in informal settlements and the varied nature of resources in these areas, reflects the varied pace of development in the different areas.

CRIME AND VIOLENCE

Crime and violence were a problem in most informal settlements and residents of informal settlements experienced theft, rape and murder. Taxi violence during which rival taxi associations forcibly prevented each other from operating also impacted on people's lives. Social workers commented that the political violence that had marked informal settlements in the past seemed to have abated.

ALCOHOL AND DRUG ABUSE

Social workers felt that the incidence of alcohol and drug abuse in informal settlements was high, particularly among the teenagers and unemployed young adults. Very often, residents of informal settlements brewed their own alcohol which some social workers felt was dangerous. There were stories about people using sub standard ingredients and poisoning people. In some informal settlements, people made a living by selling drugs, particularly dagga.

ILLITERACY AND LACK OF SKILLS

Low levels of education, illiteracy and a lack of marketable skills meant that trying to place residents of informal settlements in employment was difficult.

Different social workers however, focussed on different problem issues, according to the constitution and mission of the organisation for which they worked. These are summarised in the following table:

Table 14: Types of problems according to field of social work

FIELD	PROBLEMS
Child and family welfare	Abandoned babies Child abuse – mainly sexual abuse Orphaned children – often through AIDS Children with HIV/AIDS Pregnant teenagers Children and young people who truanted from school and absconded from home Abuse of women Difficulties in accessing child care and foster grants
The elderly	Abused and neglected elderly people Illiteracy Difficulties in accessing old age pensions
Health	Tuberculosis HIV/AIDS Sexually transmitted diseases
Trauma	Post traumatic stress syndrome Stress

It is not within the scope of this thesis to provide an in depth analysis of each of these problems. A description of the problems according to the social workers is provided.

ABANDONED BABIES

Social workers reported that they had to deal with increasing numbers of abandoned babies and in 1992, already, Loening pointed out that this phenomenon of abandoned babies was becoming more common in South Africa. In 1990, 300 African infants had been abandoned in hospitals in the province of KwaZulu- Natal and one hospital alone, had recorded 30 to 40 abandoned babies each year for the previous five years. During the period, 1991 to 1995, the Durban Child Welfare Society had dealt with 544 cases of abandoned babies (Ledderborge, 1996).

According to the social workers, these babies were sometimes abandoned in toilets and in rubbish bins or were placed at a bus stop or on the steps outside the welfare organisation. Sometimes babies and also older children were abandoned with neighbours or people in the community. The mother (or in some cases, the father) would ask the person to care for the child while she/he went on an errand and never returned.

Various causes for parents abandoning their children have been identified. These include poverty, lack of accommodation, the breakdown of family structures, the weakening of traditional values, the stigma of a child born out of wedlock and lack of information about alternatives (Loening, 1992). The social workers in this study who worked with abandoned babies believed that the major cause of this problem was poverty and the inability of mothers to care for their infants.

CHILD ABUSE

Child abuse continues to increase in South Africa. Latest figures released by the South African Police Services indicated that 31 780 cases of child rape

and attempted rape had been reported in the 18 months since January 2000. More than 10 000 of these had been within the first six months of 2001 (Mail and Guardian, 2 November 2001). Given that many of these cases are not reported, it is likely that these figures are even higher.

Child abuse was a major problem for a number of the social workers. Of particular concern to social workers were the young ages of the children being abused. A number of them reported dealing with cases of abuse of toddlers and babies. One social worker was also concerned that the age of perpetrators was decreasing with young boys sexually abusing small girls.

HEALTH ISSUES: HIV/AIDS AND TUBERCULOSIS

The nature and extent of the AIDS pandemic in South Africa was discussed in the previous chapter. Social workers were of the opinion that they were beginning to see the effects of this pandemic in the communities in which they worked. They said that they had always suspected that it was a problem but did not have any hard evidence to support this suspicion. Now they were actually experiencing the death of their clients. The problem of children orphaned as a result of their parents dying of the disease was also increasing. A major problem, as discussed in the previous chapter was the stigma associated with the disease.

One of the priorities for social workers in the health field was addressing the problem of tuberculosis. Ensuring that people took their medication was important and much of the work in this area revolved around implementing the DOT (directly observed treatment) method.

TEENAGERS AT RISK

Those social workers who worked with teenagers said that truancy from school and "uncontrollable" teenagers were a problem. "Uncontrollable" teenagers absconded from home, abused alcohol and drugs, and were involved in prostitution. Of particular concern were pregnant teenagers who

could not care adequately for their infants and who were at risk for abandoning them or abusing them.

WOMEN ABUSE

Some social workers said that women in informal settlements suffered greatly and many were physically abused by their partners. In addition, most social workers believed that there were high rates of rape in the informal settlements.

NEGLECT AND ABUSE OF ELDERS

Of concern to the social workers who worked in this field, was the increasing numbers of abused elders. In some cases, this abuse was physical and related to the use of the elderly person's pension. Elderly people were beaten, or threatened with beatings, if they did not give their pensions to their children. The pension was then used for purposes other than for the care of the elderly person and neglect would result. In some cases, neglect was not intentional but a result of the poverty and the poorly resourced circumstances in which the elderly people in informal settlements lived. Similar to the problems described in Bhambayi, these social workers found that frail, elderly people would be left alone during the week while the family worked elsewhere. Food and drink would be left on a bedside table but the person might be left in soiled and wet bed linen until the return of the family.

STRESS

Many social workers mentioned that people who lived in informal settlements faced tremendous challenges and they were of the opinion that levels of stress were high. The insecurity of living in an informal settlement and not having security of tenure added to the problem. Many residents of informal settlements had also experienced violence in some form or another and it was hypothesised that many people might be suffering from post traumatic stress disorder.

The problems identified by social workers mirrored the problems identified in the literature (Chapter Four) and the problems in Bhambayi (Chapters Five and Six). Residents of Bhambayi mentioned two problems that were not mentioned by any one else – the problem of people who were disabled and who experienced mobility problems and difficulties with wheelchairs, and outsiders who caused problems in the community.

Methods of social work

Thirteen (59% of the total) of the social workers described themselves as community workers. Of these, three did no casework at all while the others either had very small caseloads or were expected to help with certain cases on occasions. The other nine (41% of the total) social workers were primarily caseworkers. All of these social workers also engaged in group work or community programmes.

The activities of the social workers were varied and reflected the multifaceted nature of social work intervention. The following table describes the activities undertaken by social workers in this sample. It provides an overview of what social workers in informal settlements do, not an exhaustive description of these activities. Further in-depth examples of these activities are provided as the chapter unfolds.

Table 15: Examples of activities undertaken by social workers

METHOD OF SOCIAL WORK	SOME SOCIAL WORK ACTIVITIES
CASEWORK Statutory work – Child protection in Terms of the Child Care Act, No 74 of 1983 Therapy	Investigations of abuse and neglect Placement of children in alternate care Supervision of placements Family re-unification work Play therapy Post traumatic stress counselling Crisis counselling
GROUP WORK Support groups Educational groups Therapy groups	Foster parent groups Peer group support programmes Preparation for adoption and fostering Life skills and conflict resolution groups Women abuse Perpetrators of violence
COMMUNITY WORK Grassroots development Building capacity Building organisations Community education Social action	Establishing crèches Establishing income generating groups Training programmes for committees Establishing health fora Establishing co-ordinating committees HIV/AIDS awareness programmes Child abuse awareness programmes Public march to highlight elders' needs Petition re closure of clinic

THREE SOCIAL WORKERS TELL THEIR STORIES

In this section, three social workers describe their work. In choosing these stories, I have attempted to isolate particular discourses that influenced how they viewed their work and which impacted on their practice in informal settlements. They were chosen to illustrate the range of problems social workers address and the methods they use to address these. Each story is also broadly representative of other social workers in the study. Reshma is primarily a community worker and her story represents those community workers who were positive and enthusiastic about their work. Buyi, who is primarily a caseworker with a large percentage of child abuse cases to deal with, represents that group of social workers who were overwhelmed by the problems facing them as social workers and who found their work exhausting and difficult. Pam, the third social worker, was also primarily a caseworker, but was determined to find a way to incorporate other methods into her work and ensure that her practice was relevant and helpful to the people she worked with. All three social workers worked in the field of child and family welfare.

RESHMA: "I am brave.....and cheeky!"

Full of energy and enthusiasm, Reshma was a pleasure to interview. The interview was interrupted a number of times – we had to move offices at one point and for the first part of the interview entertained an infant who was waiting for his mother to visit.

Reflecting social work's tradition of reaching out to people and commitment to the poor, Reshma described how the organisation for which she worked had seen the need to offer social work services in informal settlements about five years previously. Social workers were asked to volunteer to work in these areas and she had been one of these social workers. In the beginning, it had been difficult but Reshma described herself as, *"I am very brave. I thought, what the hell! So off I went!"*

In starting work in the informal settlements, Reshma followed standard social work processes. Although she did not understand much isiZulu, she worked at establishing relationships and identifying needs. She did this by visiting community leaders and talking with them about their community and the needs of residents of the informal settlement. Among the first things she did was a need's assessment. It soon became clear that concern for the community's children and the stated need for a creche could be used as a means of helping the community to work together to improve their area. Children were being neglected while their parents were out working or looking for work, sometimes in areas far away. This meant that children would be left unsupervised for days. They were not being fed and they were often left in unhygienic conditions. The expressed needs of the community and the organisation's mission and constitution dovetailed and Reshma was able to proceed.

Establishing the creche called for considerable perseverance and persistence on Reshma's part. The first step was to find a piece of land for the creche. This took two years of negotiating with the local council who finally agreed to release a plot if the community paid a certain amount from the subsidy that had been allocated for the upgrading of the community. The community agreed to this, which according to Reshma, was an indication of their commitment to the project. The next step was to obtain sponsorship for the building and Reshma played a very active role in this process and it was in relation to this that she described herself as, *"Me, I am cheeky! I don't keep quiet!"*

In order to obtain sponsorship, Reshma would approach everyone she could think off. Undeterred by failure, she continued to ask for money. She would tell potential sponsors, *"Look, I have R50.00, but that is not going to build a crèche. You just give me R10 000 and I'll get another R10 000 from someone else".*

Reshma also realised that to successfully raise money, there needed to be a

pay off for the sponsors. She and the creche committee agreed that donors would be given advertising space on the walls of the creche building and would also be invited to have a representative on the committee. She felt that social workers had to be more business- like in their dealings with business and not always expect "handouts": *"Social workers moan and groan and want, want, want – but you must honour your sponsors, you must make it worthwhile for them!"*

A brick manufacturing company, an insurance company and a service organisation were eventually persuaded to assist the crèche effort and in this way, Reshma raised R150 000 to build the creche. The crèche now provides care for 33 children and employment for four women from the community. These "teachers" were trained by a non-governmental organisation called TREE (Training and Resources for Early Education) and Reshma plays a supervisory and supportive role as far as they are concerned. The building also houses an advice desk for abused women and provides a venue for various group meetings. A committee, made up of community members, a representative of the sponsors and the social worker, runs it.

Keeping the community interested in the long time that it took to get firstly the land, and then the money, was a major task. Reshma said it was important to keep them informed all the time of what was going on and to include them as much as possible in the negotiations. Her own attitude was also important – she remained optimistic and determined and thus provided a good role model for the community. She also had high expectations of community leaders – a further example of her "cheekiness". Eleven people formed the initial committee but only about seven attended meetings regularly. She dealt with this by being very open with them: *"So, I said to them, I'm not scared to talk plainly, I said to them: 'I only want people who are prepared to work'"*. This appeared to be a successful strategy and the committee now is a well functioning one.

Reshma is also involved in another creche project in a second informal settlement. People involved in this second crèche project told her they wanted a crèche like the one described above – her reply was: “ *I said, Oh no! I have no magic balls! I told them straight – this is what you have to do. You had better get started then*”. She felt it important to clarify from the beginning that it was “they” that would be establishing the crèche and to immediately squash any suggestion that she, the social worker, would somehow just provide. Each household in the community has now donated R2-00 for the bricks and cement with which to build the structure.

Life skills training for young people is another area of social work which Reshma enjoys. Several years ago she received a bursary to do a course on life skills training at an American university. She describes this experience as being a life altering one and feels a commitment to help other people have this experience. She felt that in many cases, life skills groups are poorly run and very superficial. The importance of reflection is an essential part of life skills training and she felt this is often neglected by social workers.

Another project in which she is involved is a women’s empowerment group. She had photos of this group meeting under a tree and she brought these out to show me. The group brought their chairs and cloths for the table and held meetings under the tree. Various speakers were invited to talk to the group about topics that interested them – family planning and HIV/AIDS were two topics that had recently been discussed.

Reshma does no casework except when it is her turn to deal with abandoned baby cases. The policy at this organisation that these cases are rotated and each social worker has a turn to deal with these. In this way, no social worker is overwhelmed by these cases. It was because of this that it happened that we entertained the infant for part of the interview. The mother of the baby had been located and was expected to come in to see the baby. However, she was late and the “place of safety” mother had left the baby with the social

worker while she attended to some other business. The mother did eventually arrive and the latter part of the interview proceeded uninterrupted.

Reshma used this opportunity to explain to me that since doing community work her attitude towards casework had changed. Working with communities had helped her learn that people could take responsibility for themselves. She said that she had much more faith in people now and until she was proved wrong she would trust that they would do what was right. She believed that the mother would come even though some of the other social workers were doubtful. When the mother arrived, she brought with her a bottle of "Purity" baby food for the infant. Reshma was very touched by this gesture – "Purity" is an expensive brand of infant food - and it was proof for her that this mother cared for her baby. Abandoning the baby had been the act of a desperate young woman who could not see her way clear to care for the baby. Reshma said that many of her colleagues did not share her optimistic view of people and said that it saddened her to listen to their judgemental attitudes towards women who abandoned their babies. This baby had been tested positive for HIV and Reshma said she was not looking forward to sharing this news with the mother. Listening to Reshma talk about this mother and baby, I felt sure that she would handle this sensitive issue with great care.

BUYI: "Its so hard... sometimes I just cry"

Buyi's story was punctuated with many sighs, shaking of the head and variations of the expression "its so difficult". She felt quite overwhelmed by her work and listening to her at times created a dilemma for me. I was tempted to confront what seemed to me her negative attitude and view towards her clients, but I also wanted to listen carefully and try and understand her story from her perspective. Buyi's story illustrates how a combination of heavy caseloads, lack of support and her own personal attitudes contributed to low job satisfaction and demoralisation.

Buyi had a caseload of 200, approximately twenty percent of these were child sexual abuse cases. These were difficult cases to deal with and caused her

great emotional stress: *"Sometimes these cases are so hard, I can't cope. One time I started losing so much weight. Sometimes I just cry, it's so hard."*

She explained that in many child abuse cases, the mother was working and the father was home supposedly caring for the children but instead he was sexually abusing them. She seemed to be suggesting that the abuse would not happen if mothers were at home doing what they were supposed to do, that is, caring for their children. Sometimes the abuse had been going for five years and the child had told her mother but had not been believed. Again, the implication was that the mother was to blame for the problem. Only when the child developed an infection did the facts come to light – in some cases, this had resulted in permanent damage to the child's reproductive organs.

HIV/AIDS was another outcome of some abuse cases. Buyi said the myth that having intercourse with a young virgin cured HIV/AIDS seemed to be prevalent in the areas where she worked but she wasn't sure if this was the reason for the increase in child sexual abuse cases. She wondered if people were not using this to excuse their behaviour.

Child abuse cases took a lot of time and Buyi resented the disruption to her working day that attending to child abuse cases caused. She explained that she was expected to respond to these cases immediately: *"Even if I am in a meeting, I have to stop attending the meeting and attend to that matter"*.

Buyi coped with the pressures of dealing with child abuse cases by following a set procedure. First of all, the police were notified. Then the child was taken for a medical examination at the hospital. This was important, said Buyi, so that evidence of the abuse could be documented. Without this evidence it was unlikely a successful prosecution of the perpetrator could result. She would then write a report for the children's court in order to open an enquiry in terms of the Child Care Act, No 74 of 1983. The child would then be placed in alternate care, usually a children's home, pending the finalisation of the enquiry. Buyi's main concern was to ensure that the child was in a safe place

and that the abuse would be stopped. Missing in this account of how she intervenes in such cases, was any reference to comforting the child or assisting the family to deal with the abuse.

When asked if any children could be left with their families in the community, she answered in the negative and was of the opinion that very seldom could the community protect the child from further abuse and, *"I have to make sure the child is protected"*.

Mothers, she said, were usually not co-operative and on occasions she had to ask the police to assist her with the removal of the child. Being unable to protect their children from abuse, it seemed that Buyi then expected them to co-operate in the removal of the children from their care. It did not occur to her to reframe this lack of co-operation regarding a removal as care for the child. She found this traumatic and impacted on her relationship with the family and thus her ability to help them. She said, *"They get very cross with me"*.

Buyi also had many "problem teenagers" on her caseload. These were generally youngsters who were in foster care. They did not receive regular services (with a caseload of 200, routine follow up and support work was impossible) with the social worker only visiting when statutory requirements had to be met. At this point, she would request a school report and it was then that she discovered the child was truanting and doing badly at school. The foster parents would also complain the child was uncontrollable. Buyi dealt with these situations with threats and by giving the child a *"lecture"*. She explained: *"I stress to them that if you are not going to school, the government will not support you.... You are placed in foster care, you do not have parents who support you, so if you are not going to school, the government will not support you"*.

Was this a successful strategy? Buyi wryly admitted that in very few cases was she successful in persuading them to return to school and acknowledged, *"Most of the time, I am just wasting their time"*.

The implications of these young people not attending school were serious – the foster grant would be stopped and the foster parents would often then refuse to continue to care for the youngster. Having failed to offer the support that foster parents of teenagers need, Buyi would transfer responsibility for the case to someone else. In cases where the foster child was related to the foster parents, Buyi told them: *"Its your responsibility now, its out of my hands. You have to face the problem. You can't expect the government to do everything for you"*. In cases where the child was not related to the foster parents she would remove the child, either to a children's home or a school of industries, in terms of the Child Care Act No 74 of 1983. In either case, Buyi felt she had taken appropriate action and acted efficiently to ensure that someone took responsibility for the child.

The number of people who, she believed, were abusing the system, in order to access the foster care grant, disturbed Buyi. She had had cases where women fostered their own children – they would report that the child had been abandoned with them and even make a statement under oath to this effect. In one case this came to light when a neighbour, upset by some altercation, reported the matter to the welfare. Now Buyi spends a considerable amount of time checking birth details with the Department of Home Affairs and reported that she has *"caught out"* a number of people.

The enthusiasm for ensuring that state pensions were not fraudulently accessed did not seem to extend to ensuring that state officials did not cheat and deprive clients of their rightful pensions. She described how some of her clients complained about the child care grants and claimed they were receiving amounts of R50.00 rather than the full amount of R110.00. That this was suspicious and suggestive of corruption within the system was not her concern. She had told her clients that it was not her problem: *"They expect*

me to do everything for them. I told them they must go and sort it out. I am not the pension officer."

Buyi clearly found her work in informal settlements overwhelmingly difficult. At one point in the interview, she said, *"I wonder if I will grow old in this profession?"*

PAM: "Oh, I am a general dogsbody!"

In reply to a question about what her job was, she replied cheerfully, *"Oh, I'm a general dogsbody!"* This, she felt, described her work. She spends one day per week in each of three informal settlements and as an "area worker", she is expected to work in an integrated manner to address problems. In reality, this meant having to deal with a caseload of 150. Like Buyi, many of these cases were child abuse cases, and like Buyi, other work had to be put on hold while these cases were dealt with. Unlike Buyi, however, who complained about how this interrupted her work, Pam understood the importance of a quick response and accepted this as part of her work as caring for some of the most vulnerable members of society, children. She commented, *"You don't know how serious it is, so you have to respond immediately"*.

Pam also had a more flexible protocol for dealing with such cases. Reflecting social work values of individualisation where each person is treated as a unique individual, Pam said that each case was different and had to be treated differently. Sometimes, she explained, children had to be placed in a children's home because their safety in their parental home could not be assured and the first priority had to be the child's safety. In these cases, children's court enquiry procedures would be opened. In other cases, Pam felt that family could care adequately for the child at home if they received the right kind of help and support. Many factors needed to be considered and it was therefore important to assess each family before deciding how to intervene.

Pam had done a number of play therapy courses and was particularly interested in helping abused children using this medium. She felt it was important to find ways of helping children deal with the trauma they had suffered. Individual therapy was time consuming and expensive, but she believed that if social work is serious about helping children, it has to make sure that children get therapy. She found this aspect of her work to be very rewarding and commented, *"I'd love to just do that, that could be my role in the agency and I could do all the therapy"*.

Pam did not speak isiZulu very well, but understood the language fairly well. Although this was not ideal, what was the alternative, she asked. If she did not help, who would? She also did not have many play therapy materials but made creative use of what was available and in doing so had inadvertently, discovered the usefulness of a set of plastic farm animals. She explained how a little girl had picked up a set of plastic farm animals and, through play, had "slaughtered" the cow. Crying and sobbing, she had called the cow by the name of the abuser and only relaxed once the cow was "dead" and "buried" (put away in the box). On subsequent occasions, when she played with the farm animals, she left the cow in the box. Slaughtering cattle is common in Zulu culture and this little girl was able to use symbols from her own culture to express herself.

Of concern to Pam, were the increasing numbers of cases involving children with HIV. Pam demonstrated her ability to implement the value of starting where the client is in relating how she dealt with the following case. A child who had been sexually abused by her mother's boyfriend was placed with her father and his new wife. When the stepmother found out that the child was HIV positive she could not cope and demanded the child be removed. Pam said that she really tried hard to help the stepmother come to terms with this but eventually had to place the child in alternative care. The father and stepmother visit the child regularly and the stepmother is attending a group for carers of children with HIV in an attempt to help her overcome her fears of caring for such a child. The child is thriving – being in an environment where

she is well fed and cared for and away from the family turmoil seems to have benefited her greatly. This has also helped to re-assure the stepmother that the child is not in imminent danger of death. Pam is hopeful that in the not too distant future, the child will be able to return to her father's home. Pam believes that the prognosis for this family is positive and like Reshma, believes that "people will do the right thing" but sometimes need support for this. By accepting their definition of the problem, she is helping this family come to terms with having a member who is HIV+.

Pam also indicated that more parents are dying and that caring for orphaned children is becoming a challenge. Not only do the children need help in coming to terms with the loss of a parent, but the grandparents who usually assumed care of the children also mourned the loss of a child and the loss, in many cases, of that person's income. Pam recognised the need that grandparents and children have to grieve and she said she often had to spend time just listening to them talk about the deceased relative. This she believed was an important function of supportive social work.

Pam also said that she dealt with a lot of people on a once off basis and did not open files for them. These were people she met in the community and who asked questions about how to access the child support grant and how to get legal assistance. She felt that, while this was not reflected in any statistics, it was an important function. Through answering these types of questions, she was helping to raise awareness of resources and was able to help people access the resources they needed.

Despite this huge caseload, Pam was involved in a number of other activities. She ran child abuse awareness programmes at local schools and during school holidays organised holiday programmes for children in the informal settlements. Similar to the Bhambayi children's club that was described in Chapter Five, these programmes served a number of purposes. They provided something for the children to do which kept them off the streets and prevented them from "getting into mischief". They also provided a forum for

teaching life skills such as communication skills and conflict resolution skills, as well as an opportunity to raise awareness about issues such as child abuse, teenage pregnancy, drug and alcohol abuse and HIV/AIDS.

Pam was also involved in other community work activities. One of these involved helping one community petition for the re-opening of a clinic that had been closed which had resulted in a number of hardships for community members. This entailed gathering information in order to motivate for the re-opening of the clinic. She had also established a good working relationship with a church group in one of the informal settlements and the pastor of this church acted as an intake and screening service for her. She had "trained" him regarding how to deal with certain types of cases and explained to him how to assess and when to refer. The pastor appeared to be well liked within this community and working together with him in this way was a successful way of using local leaders.

Pam spoke with enthusiasm about plans she had for income generating groups in the informal settlements. She really believed that this was an important thing to follow up but wondered where she would get the time to devote to it! She said she was working on this problem and on an optimistic note said, *"Give me some time, I'll find a way to get it right!"*

Discourses of deficits and strengths

These three stories illustrate the different ways in which social workers have constructed the notion of social work in informal settlements and within them can be found two very powerful discourses – a deficits discourse and a strengths discourse.

The deficits discourse finds expression in Buyi's story. Buyi operated from a frame of reference that placed the responsibility for problems within the individual. She believed that children who had been abused had to be placed in alternative care because their mothers are *"unco-operative"*. By labelling them unco-operative, she, firstly, blamed them for not protecting their

daughters from abuse. She did not see their lack of co-operation in the broader context of the poverty in which the people lived. The mother may have been absent because she was working or seeking work, or the mother may have been economically dependent on the perpetrator and may have felt powerless to protect the child. By deciding that they were unco-operative, she also denied them the opportunity to receive counselling and support in their roles as parents. Finally, the labelling also served the purpose of protecting herself from having to battle with the mess and uncertainty of a child abuse case. Placing the child in alternate care meant that the child was safe, and she believed she had done her duty. In addressing problems, Buyi saw no need to deal with the structural sources of her client's difficulties.

The strengths discourse, on the other hand, is identified in the narratives of social workers like Pam and Reshma, who without saying so, were working from a strengths perspective. They proceeded from a positive view of people. Reshma, for example, had faith the mother of the baby would keep the appointment. Pam accepted a family's definition of the problem when she placed a child in care because of their request – and was able to reframe this attitude as care for the child, rather than rejection of the child. In contrast, one would imagine that a social worker like Buyi would label this parent as “unco-operative”.

All three of these social workers were working in an environment characterised by a lack of resources. However, they dealt with the problem in different ways. Buyi felt quite overwhelmed by this problem whereas Pam and Reshma used methods of social work, other than casework. They engaged with community members and allowed for their participation and growth. They were also active in developing community resources.

SOCIAL WORK WITHIN A SOCIAL DEVELOPMENTAL WELFARE FRAMEWORK

The major discourse in social work in present day South Africa revolves around social development and developmental social work. The White Paper for Social Welfare (1997) identified the poor, the vulnerable and those with special needs as priorities. In this section, I examine how social workers in informal settlements address each of these issues in practice and how they are attempting to work within this paradigm.

Addressing poverty – the role of social work

Poverty as a major problem confronting people living in informal settlements was discussed in detail in Chapter Four. Residents of Bhambayi and social workers who were interviewed all viewed poverty as the main issue confronting them. Social workers addressed this in a number of ways.

SOCIAL WORK AS MATERIAL AID

Not surprisingly, social workers were often confronted with requests for material aid. Clients appeared to believe that social workers could provide them with clothing, money and food. This public perception of social work as a provider of material aid has been one of the most enduring images of social work, despite its attempts to dispel this notion. Steward and Steward (1993:51) suggested that it "has become part of received professional wisdom that social workers dislike giving material aid" and prefer instead to reject the request for immediate practical help in order to concentrate on the client's long-term needs. The proverb "give a man (woman) a fish and you feed him (her) for a day, teach him (her) how to fish and you feed him (her) forever" is often quoted as illustrating the importance of empowering people to care for themselves in the long term.

The White Paper for Social Welfare (1997) emphasises the importance of developing capacity and promoting self-reliance. While social workers in this study, subscribed to this notion, they found it difficult to ignore the immediate

needs of their clients. One social worker, Jenny, commented as follows: *"Most of them are in such crisis and if you don't deal with those very basic needs how you ever going to deal with all the other stuff"*. She gave examples of sick people not being able to pay for the taxi to take them to hospital and of mothers who needed identity documents to access child care grants but who did not have the money to travel to the Home Affairs office to apply for these documents. She also hypothesised that the reason that many children were failing at school was because they were malnourished. This, she thought, had long term implications - these children then developed a dislike of school, they developed a low self image and this led to truancy and eventually to other problems such as school drop outs and children on the street. However, her organisation's policy was not to provide material aid and she not only felt, but also was, powerless to intervene in these circumstances. This policy, coupled with a lack of resources was identified by a number of social workers. Fikile agreed with this, saying: *"We simply don't have anything to give people"*. Social workers in van Schalkwyk's study (1997) used their own resources to cope with this dilemma. One commented that she knew it was "wrong" but she kept old clothes in her office which she could give to clients in need.

In some cases, organisations did have limited material aid to offer clients. A dilemma then arose regarding dependency. Thandi explained: *"You give them one food parcel and the next thing they are back again - so we say you can only get one food parcel"*. However, in a context where unemployment rates are high and employment opportunities for unskilled people rare, people are unlikely to become independent in the short term. A once off food parcel is really no solution at all.

One of the conditions attached to the giving of a food parcel in one organisation was that the client had to have applied for a state grant and the food parcel was therefore seen as a way of helping the person in the interim period. It also meant, however, that many people who did not qualify for state grants did not

qualify for a food parcel and this policy thus did nothing to resolve either the short- term or long-term material needs of the client.

Giving food parcels can also be problematic in other ways. A social worker in van Schalkwyk's study (1997) commented that they (the residents of informal settlements) did not always like the contents of the food parcels and this caused resentment. One of the social workers in this study also expressed this view. A religious organisation had provided a vegetarian dish for a community function but many people were angry that it did not contain meat. Some of them in fact threw the food away. The religious organisation was appalled at this waste of food and threatened never to assist people in this community again. The social worker felt very hurt by this incident and found it difficult to accept that people could behave in such a manner. While it is possible that people behaved boorishly in this case, it must also be remembered that, for African people, meat is an important ingredient in public celebrations and that on these occasions, traditionally an animal would be slaughtered. Perhaps the problem might have been averted if the social worker had discussed the nature of the food donation prior to organising it.

One organisation had an arrangement with a religious body to provide food for people. The social worker, Velaphi, remarked wryly that people soon got to know this and that they would report for counselling so that they could get a referral for material aid. He explained: *"But what I also realised that people were not coming here to talk about their pain but because they get a way to get a referral. No, you go there and talk about your pain and then they will refer you!"* While he understood why this happened he also found it frustrating that people who would clearly benefit from counselling used the system for their short-term needs. These clients however had found a way of negotiating the system in order to meet their needs.

Other writers have also identified the dilemma surrounding material aid. Harber (1998) explained how a community put pressure on an organisation caring for vulnerable children to meet basic needs and to provide material aid. The

organisation decided to resolve the problem by contracting with a "partner" who would offer the material aid, only to find that this was not possible. With the emphasis on development within the present policy framework, no organisation wanted to be seen as "giving handouts" and the organisation was unable to find a partner willing to do this.

SOCIAL WORK AS LINKING PEOPLE WITH RESOURCES

Baer and Federico (1978:6) in a classic definition of the purposes of social work pointed out that "social work is concerned with the interactions between people and the institutions of society that affect the ability of people to accomplish life tasks, realise aspirations and values and alleviate distress." In addition to enhancing the problem solving, coping and developmental capacities of people, the purposes of social work include "to promote the effective and humane operation of the systems that provide people with resources and services" and "to link people with systems that provide them with resources, services and opportunities". Potgieter (1998: 28) described this purpose as, "to develop and lobby for resources that do not exist, facilitate the responsiveness of systems to human needs, link client systems with resources and restructure the environment where appropriate to improve the quality of life for all people".

All the social workers who participated in the study described linking people with resources as an important part of their work. The successful implementation of this purpose presupposes two things – one, that resources exist to which social workers can refer clients, and two, that social workers have the ability, power and resources themselves to effect this linking of people and resources.

The study results indicated that resources do exist. With regard to material assistance, referrals were made to state departments for assistance in applying for pensions and grants. These include old age pensions for the elderly over the age of 60 years, disability grants for those with severe disabilities that preclude their employment in the open labour market and childcare grants for children under the age of seven years. For all these pensions and grants, a means test is applied. These grants can be seen as an important source of poverty

alleviation. Ardington and Lund (1995) have argued that these grants are a significant source of income to a large number of people. They are a reliable source of income that contribute to household security and they are also the basis for credit facilities in local markets thus contributing further to food security. Old age pensions in particular can be seen as "allowances that enable vulnerable families to survive and enable children to be cared for within family units" (McKendrick and Shingwenyana, 1995: 234). Assisting people to access these grants is an important function of social work in informal settlements and in doing so, social workers make an important contribution to the alleviation of poverty.

A major problem however was the accessibility of these resources. For example, in order to apply for a government grant, a client needs an identity document that can only be accessed via the Department of Home Affairs whose offices are in the city centre. For many clients in informal settlements, this requires a taxi trip not less than R15 – money, which if available, is rather spent on food. Without the identity document, clients are unable to proceed.

Government policy also puts social workers in a difficult position. The childcare grant, which at present amounts to R110 per month, is only available for children up to the age of seven years. As Nombuso put it, *"It is too little. Also only there from birth to 7, then what happens? That's when expenses start to increase, they need money for uniforms and books for schools. Also lots of them are above 8 or 7, so grant doesn't help."*

Many welfare organisations objected strongly when government implemented this policy and believe that it has not had the desired effect of alleviating poverty. Despite explaining the policy to clients, clients often found it difficult to accept and their anger was directed at the "messenger" of the bad news.

A further problem with the new child support grant is the simultaneous withdrawal over a period of time of the "old" maintenance grant which was substantially more than the new child support grant. Each of the previous

departments of welfare had its own system of maintenance grants and the amounts differed in each department. These grants were aimed at helping single mothers care for children and mothers were eligible for these grants until their children turned 18. Many of these women now find themselves with less money and no support system in place to assist them. With low skills and a lack of work experience these women are almost guaranteed not to find employment in an already depressed economy.

A further problem was that some people in informal settlement know of women with children over the age of seven who were still drawing the reduced portion of the "old" maintenance grant. This was seen as unfair and caused problems in interpersonal relationships and anger towards the social worker who was unable to do anything about it.

A further difficulty was experienced when grants were stopped and people had to re-apply. Part of this was related to a drive within government to stop the fraudulent payment of government grants. People were informed that they would have to re-apply for their grants by certain dates. The problem was that many people in informal settlements could not be reached by the postal service, many of them are illiterate, many of them had moved from their original addresses and they therefore did not know they were supposed to reapply. Their grants were then terminated and this resulted in great hardship for many people. Social workers were approached for help and many clients did not understand why the social worker could not just re-instate the grant.

Underlying many of the clients' complaints, appeared to be a perception that social workers were agents of the government and had the power to influence the administration of grants. Like the residents of Bhambayi, it seems that many people saw social workers as "daughters of the government".

Some social workers had limited but practical ways of assisting clients to improve their economic situation. They used their own connections to assist clients to get employment. Nombuso explained: *"Yes, you use friends, people*

you know that are looking for somebody to help in the home, gardening and things like that”.

SOCIAL WORK AS FACILITATING PRODUCTIVE EMPLOYMENT/SELF EMPLOYMENT

Another way in which social workers can contribute to economic development is by assisting low income and special needs clients to engage in productive employment or self employment (Midgely, 1996, Raheim, 1996). Productive self-employment, it is hoped, will restore self-respect and facilitate self-reliance. In addition, it will help people to overcome dependency so that people no longer consume scarce resources but contribute positively to their own well being (Raheim, 1996). Social workers with their community work experience and skills at working with groups are thought to have an important role to play in helping to set up income generating groups.

Despite the enthusiasm with which these writers approach the subject, there is also some indication in the literature that income generating groups are not always the panacea they are made out to be. Mayoux (1991) studied 43 income generating groups in India and found that over a period of three years, only three of these groups made any substantial contribution to the group members income. Ndwanga (1994) detailed a litany of difficulties facing income generating groups in Tanzania and concluded that despite the effort put into projects they yielded little.

Almost all the social workers who participated in the study had had some experience of working with income generating groups. Market gardens, sewing, knitting and crocheting co-operatives, hairdressing and food outlets were the most popular types of income generating activities. As Mlamba (2000) pointed out, most income generating groups seem to be within the realm of women's traditional roles. Some experiences were more successful than others but overall the results were discouraging.

The lack of trust amongst members of income generating groups was identified as a major factor impacting negatively on the establishment and maintenance of such groups. Mlambo (2000), describing an income generating project in Zimbabwe, highlighted how group members accused each other of theft and dishonesty, of not depositing money in the group's banking account and of using the groups resources for private jobs for which they kept the profits. One social worker in this study, Geetha, said that one had to remember that in most cases, people in informal settlements had come from different areas and did not have a strong sense of identity with or commitment to the informal settlement. To expect that people should come together to form a group and handle a scarce resource such as money was unrealistic. Conflict about how to run the project and distrust about who handled the money were common problems identified by social workers. Christine summed it up as follows: *"There is a huge lack of trust. There are problems whenever there is money and food. People get killed. I mean it! For example, with the national nutrition programme, four people were burned in their house because of jealousy"*

According to the social workers in this study, income generating groups were unable to meet the needs of people. The basis for all genuine development is savings, that is, "the setting aside of resources for investment in productive activities rather than using these resources for immediate consumption (Burkey, 1993:183). This problem was seen in projects where start up kits were provided. In some cases, sewing machines and fabric were provided but when sewing machines broke there was no money for repairs or when the fabric had been used up there was no money to buy any more. People used the income from the income generating activities to fulfil their immediate needs and did not save. The same applied to a gardening project that Velaphi had initiated: *"It was the same with the gardening project I initiated in ... They planted vegetables in 96, they were very nice, they sold them, once they were sold, that was it. They used all the money for themselves now here is no money to buy new seeds."*

Social workers also felt that people often had unrealistic expectations of what income generating groups could provide. Research in Bhambayi showed that

young people hoped to earn about R800.00 each per month from any income generating group they joined and some respondents in the study hoped to earn more than a R1000 each (Ransom, Poswa and van Rooyen, 1997). This was clearly unrealistic and the following comment was typical of what social worker's felt: *"People are expecting too much."*

The long process of setting up committees to access poverty alleviation funds and complicated procedures that needed to be followed also resulted in people growing weary. When people are desperate for their immediate needs to be met, waiting seems very difficult. Thandi commented as follows: *"I think they expect to get something straight away. They have that in mind. So if you are telling them about this slow process they lose interest."*

Accessing funding for training and start-up materials was also problematic in some cases. Some organisations had been able to access considerable funding from the Department of Welfare's poverty alleviation fund to assist people to begin small businesses. In one hairdressing project, people were trained and then given a starter kit consisting of combs, scissors, shampoo and conditioners and even "relaxers" which are used to straighten curly hair. In other projects, organisations were able to provide sewing machines and start up fabric. However, in other instances, start up and capital and loans for larger scale projects were difficult to access. One organisation was exploring the possibility of starting a community bank along the lines of the Grameen Bank in Bangladesh.

There also appeared to be problems with the on-going monitoring and support of income generating projects. If distrust and conflict are factors that impact negatively on groups, social workers could be well placed to help groups deal with these issues. This social worker described an almost casual approach to monitoring: *"We just monitor them. If you are going to the area, you go and meet with them. Like we have a meeting once a month for feedback"*.

Market forces and the present economic climate impacted on the success of some projects. One person pointed out that there are now so many sewing groups and market garden groups and that an already depressed market (because spending power in informal settlements is limited) is becoming saturated. In the case of sewing groups, they simply cannot compete profitably against the established textile industry which one social worker pointed out was experiencing its own problems following the relaxation of import controls and the competition from overseas products. In many cases, customers preferred to buy quality second hand clothes that were cheaper than those produced by income generating groups.

Social workers also pointed out that it was unrealistic to expect just anyone to become an entrepreneur. Successful entrepreneurship requires certain skills and attitudes and social workers questioned whether clients who are already unable to cope with their life circumstances have these skills. Some of the comments were:

"Many people are just not entrepreneurs. I mean they kind of don't have that kind of personality. They are the kind of person who needs to work for someone who tells them this is what you need to do." (Andrea).

"The whole issue of economic development, we were debating it, they say not everybody has got skills, got marketing skills, and when we think of income generating groups we think of people making things and selling them. Not everybody is skilled in selling. And we find it in our groups. People say, I can't sew, I can't sell. Find me something to do. Like I can do the washing and ironing. Not all of us can sell. People need to work for someone. Others say if we can sell why can't you. But people can't" (Velaphi)

Finally, some social workers questioned whether social workers themselves had the skills to help people develop such projects and indeed whether this was part of social work practice:

"I am very clear that I am not an entrepreneur. At the end of the day we need to be clear we do not have those skills. We need to concentrate on what we can do" (Geetha).

"I don't have too many business skills and here I am trying to teach the clients how to run something effectively and with profit" (Zanele).

While they were able to identify the factors that contributed to the failure of income generating groups, social workers were generally dismayed that their good intentions had come to naught. Fikile said:

"We really tried hard. We did everything right. Firstly, we chose people from our casework and set up a meeting with them. We asked them what they want. They said they want to serve food, traditional food. After that we asked them to check what they want to buy, the prices, so we made them compare prices. Then we bought containers for them, stove, pots, kettles, everything. After that, the project was implemented. Everything was there for them. But before we implemented the project, we trained them. We trained them in cooking, in business skills, how to manage cash, how to check the stock, we trained in them in all that. Some of the social workers trained them, and we also use KwaZulu Training Trust"

Why then did things go wrong? The answer might lie in the fact that *"Everything was there for them"*. Burkey (1993) argued that any development effort must begin with the resources of the people themselves and that development agencies should not provide capital in any form until people have developed their self respect through mobilising those resources of their own that they can. In this particular example, it is not unrealistic to think that the women might have been able to supply their own containers and through a small contribution each might have been able to provide some of the ingredients needed. Burkey (1993) advocated that people first go through a process of conscientisation during which they analyse the causes of their poverty and the steps they can take to alleviate it. Once they understand this,

they will be motivated to save. Perhaps social workers did not spend enough time with groups in the beginning stages.

That social workers do not always engage in extensive consultation in the early stages is not entirely their fault. One social worker, Greta, explained how her organisation was informed by the Department of Welfare on a Friday that the deadline for applications for funding for income generating groups was the following Monday. She and her colleagues worked all weekend to complete the application forms without consulting the communities concerned. She knew this was the not the right way to do things and felt uncomfortable about the process, but did not want to pass up the opportunity for funding. A project that they thought might be good was a market garden but when the funding came through and they approached the community, the response was negative. They did not want to do gardening.

Addressing the needs of the vulnerable and those with special needs

Caring and concern for the vulnerable is at the heart of social work's values and social work has been concerned with the improvement of the quality of life of disadvantaged groups since its earliest beginnings (Potgieter, 1998). All the social workers in this study had a mandate to care for the most vulnerable and those with special needs in our society. Social workers in the child welfare field were particularly concerned for the welfare of vulnerable children – abandoned babies, children who had been abused, children infected and affected by HIV/AIDS and children living in poverty. Similarly, those engaged in work with the elderly were concerned with caring for the elderly. People suffering from tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS were the particular concern of those in the health field while those who had suffered trauma and violence were the concern of the social worker who specialised in this field of work. All of these people are among the most vulnerable in our society and living in informal settlements, they are further marginalised and their situation exacerbated by the unresponsive environment in which they find themselves.

SOCIAL WORK AS COUNSELLING AND THERAPY

Only two social workers (Velaphi and Pam) who were mainly caseworkers described some of their work as therapy. As already discussed in the chapter, Pam had a special interest in using play therapy to help children who had been abused. She found this aspect of her work fulfilling and expressed a wish to be able to do more in this field. She believed that it was important for children who had been abused to have the opportunity to work through the trauma they had suffered.

Velaphi provided counselling for people who had experienced violence and trauma, especially during the period prior to the first democratic elections in 1994. Many people had lost their homes and families during this period and still suffered the effects of these experiences. This social worker found his work to be very challenging. His work was based on a western model of post traumatic stress counselling that relied heavily on the demonstration of empathy as a way of creating an understanding therapeutic climate in which the client could explore their feelings. This was not always possible working with predominantly isiZulu speaking clients. In the first place, according to this social worker, the isiZulu language does not have a wide repertoire of "feeling" words and it is sometimes difficult to put into words the degree of feeling. A second factor was that clients did not always see the point of talking about what happened long ago and either wanted immediate and concrete advice on how to deal with the problem (for example, how to cope with recurring nightmares) or material aid. The social worker felt that counselling was something new in many of the African communities and that they needed to be educated regarding what it was and how it could help people.

Velaphi also made the point that, in his opinion, most social workers do not like counselling. He felt that this was due to the fact that successful counselling can take a long time and that results are not always immediate. One has to be patient and to accept that clients will often take a few steps backwards before they begin to move forwards. He thought it was unfortunate that so much attention was being directed towards community development

(which he believed was important) and that the importance of providing quality counselling services was ignored.

Velaphi did a considerable amount of group therapy. This included providing de-briefing sessions for bank staff who had experienced a robbery. With the high levels of crime in South Africa, Velaphi felt that providing these types of therapeutic services were essential. He also ran groups for people who had experienced political violence and who were still several years later struggling to cope with the trauma they had suffered. Some of these people had lost their homes and members of their families while others had experienced torture at the hands of the apartheid security forces. Velaphi believed that without therapy for these people, development would not take place, a view supported by Sewpaul (1997:5), when she wrote that it is "as important to reconstruct the damaged spirits and psyches of South African people as it is to reconstruct South Africa as a nation".

Two other social workers, Geetha and Nokulunga, ran groups that had a therapeutic focus for women who had been abused. These groups began with the purpose of providing support and counselling to women but as they became more established the purpose of the group changed. They were still support groups but in both cases, the women had begun to reach out to other women and to set up programmes in their communities which dealt with issues of abuse. Women in these groups were undergoing training as lay counsellors to assist them in their community efforts, thus reflecting the link between therapeutic intervention and development. Support groups that extend community outreach initiatives have potential to engage in advocacy and lobbying, and to evolve into profound social movements.

Other social workers in this study referred their clients to specialised organisations when they felt that counselling was necessary. Organisations included:

- Childline: An organisation specialising in child sexual abuse

- Family and Marriage Society of South Africa (FAMSA): An organisation which specialises in relationship problems
- South African National Council for Alcoholism: An organisation which specialises in dealing with problems of alcohol and drug dependency problems
- Shelters for abused women

In the previous section, I described some of the problems associated with referrals for material aid and government grants and pensions. Similar problems arose with referrals to specialised organisations. An example was the problems involved in referring children to Childline. Childline is a private organisation and is the only specialised facility in the greater Durban area that provides therapeutic services for children who have been sexually abused. It is situated in a suburb some 15 kilometers from the city centre and in many cases, clients would need four taxi rides to get there and back again. This could cost R40.00 or more. For clients who were battling to feed their families and pay school fees, therapy at R40.00 a trip was not a priority. In addition, this organisation has a long waiting list and due to its own financial constraints is unable to decentralise their services. Recent newspaper reports have indicated that this organisation is in imminent danger of closing down unless they receive urgent financial assistance (Daily News, 8 July 2001). Many children who have been sexually abused are therefore not receiving the assistance they deserve.

SOCIAL WORK AS STATUTORY WORK: THE PARADOX OF CARING

Social workers in the child and family welfare organisations were inundated with statutory work related to child protection work. Social workers dealt with a large number of cases of child abuse and neglect where children had to be removed from their parental care and placed in alternate care, as well as with babies who were found abandoned. [This involved a great deal of administrative work, obtaining identity documents and medical certificates, liaising with the police services and the courts, writing reports and negotiating placements for these children.

The Child Care Act, No 74 of 1983, aims to provide the means through which children in vulnerable circumstances can be protected and care for. However, in implementing this Act social workers are placed in the position of having to evaluate clients' circumstances and to decide whether or not clients "deserve" protection and care. Issues of social control and blaming the victim came to the fore in discussions about how social workers are engaged in statutory work. In discussing the difficulty in finding appropriate foster parents for children, Nombuso commented that they only do it for the money, not in the interests of the child. Like Buyi, some social workers were suspicious of the motives of potential foster parents.

Crisis work, by its very nature, took precedence over other duties. An abandoned baby had to be placed as a matter of urgency or an abused child removed to a place of safety. Routine supervision and support of, for example, foster care and family rehabilitation was neglected. As illustrated by Buyi's story, social workers were dismayed to discover that there were many problems, such as truancy, behaviour problems in school and poor school progress, which may have been prevented had appropriate support and counselling been offered to families.

A further example of a deficit's discourse is found in Nokulunga's discussion about how she deals with abandoned babies. She explained that she put notices in newspapers and asked local radio stations to advertise for information about the babies. This was seldom successful and she commented, *"The mother just doesn't feel like claiming them"*. This statement places all the blame for the child's abandonment on the mother (what about the father?) and reduces the cause of abandonment to a "feeling" that the mother does not want the child. This social worker, and those like her who work in informal settlements know the poverty that exists and they know that rearing children in such circumstances is difficult. However, when it comes to understanding why mothers abandon their babies they are unable to place it in the broader context of structural problems.

SOCIAL WORK AS COMMUNITY EDUCATION

Community education is described by Weyers (1997) as a model of community work that aims to help community members increase their knowledge and insight about the community's problems and needs and the ways in which these can be addressed. The assumption is that lack of education and ignorance about certain issues impact negatively on people's abilities to meet their needs. In this study, community education was used by a number of social workers to raise awareness about problems in informal settlements.

Social workers in this study ran a number of community education projects. These focussed mainly on:

- Child abuse awareness
- AIDS awareness

Typically, child abuse programmes targeted school teachers and children. Jenny's example illustrates this: *"We ran a course for teachers and some of the community of essentially what is child abuse and how do you handle the disclosure... "So, it was about how to listen to the story, how to get some of the details and who to refer to when, and how".*

While this may raise awareness it also brings with it its own set of problems. In raising awareness one needs to ensure that resources are available to deal with the increase of requests that are likely to result. This is what Christine said: *"But boy did it open a can of worms! Childline suddenly began to get a whole lot of phone calls which the social workers were not able to handle"*

Christine was also very sceptical about these kinds of programmes and felt that giving children advice on who to contact could place them in a difficult situation because of very practical problems. For example, in many informal settlements there are no phones so it does not make sense to advertise Childline's phone number. If there are phones, they have often been vandalised and do not work. Even if the child can get to a phone, public

phones are often high up from the ground so a small child cannot reach the phone.

Velaphi had initiated a programme for teachers that aimed to help them to identify abuse and to provide the necessary support to the child. He was also involved in a programme that trained nurses to deal with patients who had experienced trauma, for example abuse cases. While these were not specifically in informal settlements, he believed that by ensuring that compassionate support structures were in place, people from informal settlements (and elsewhere) would be treated with kindness and dignity.

AIDS awareness programmes were also popular but as with the child abuse awareness programmes, some social workers were sceptical about their success. Ameena commented that they normally targeted women but that it was men who needed to change their behaviour. Geetha also pointed out that programmes should target men as women were often powerless to insist on protected sex.

Several social workers (Fikile, Geetha, Ameena and Nokulunga) described successful holiday programmes for children. Similar to the Bhambayi children's club and the holiday programme described by Pam, these programmes provided children with opportunities for recreation and fun but also provided a forum for life skills development. One very successful programme included education about road safety and the children apparently thoroughly enjoyed the input by the traffic police.

SOCIAL WORK AS LIFE SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

Life skills are "those competencies that enhance one's ability to realise a personally satisfying and productive life in the face of challenges and stressful times" (Lewis, Lewis, Daniels and D'Andrea, 1998: 69). When these skills are lacking, people are more likely to experience unhealthy levels of stress when faced with challenges and difficult choices. Proponents of life skills programmes argue that one can prevent problems by strengthening the coping

skills and general competency of people who have not yet developed dysfunction.

A number of social workers gave examples of life skills groups. Fikile ran groups for parents focusing specifically on how to deal with discipline problems. Jenny had experience with groups for teenagers that dealt with communication skills and relationships. She found that using drama was useful – the teenagers wrote and then acted out short plays about communication and relationship problems. Ameena also found that drama was a powerful tool in helping children to express themselves and to learn how to work together. Her group of children produced a play based on the fairy tale of Cinderella. Parents of children and community leaders were invited to the show and this was a powerful source of affirmation for the children.

Geetha worked with teachers and young children at a creche. This programme emphasised safety skills – in this particular informal settlement a number of children had been electrocuted from handling live electricity wires and it was this that prompted the programme.

Social workers were therefore working in some creative ways to help build capacity through life skills groups. However, there is clearly scope for far more work to be done in this area. Given the high levels of stress, stress management groups might be helpful. Programmes dealing with conflict resolution and trust building would also seem to be important.

SOCIAL WORK AS DEVELOPING RESOURCES

Only a few social workers in this study were involved in resource development. Reshma, for example, had successfully worked with one community to build a creche that served as a multi purpose building. Nokulunga had been instrumental in negotiating with the authorities for the installation of water taps in one informal settlement. Pam was working with the community on a petition to have a clinic in the area re-opened. She was also keen to establish a playground to get the children off the rubbish dump.

This section has provided an overview of the different ways in which social work is practised within informal settlements. Social workers offer a range of services that seek to help and protect those who are most vulnerable, but also to improve skills, educate people, develop capacity and in so doing prevent problems and improve the quality of life of people.

CONCLUSION

This chapter began by providing a profile of the social workers who participated in the study. Mostly fairly young and inexperienced in working in informal settlements, their stories illustrated their commitment to their work. In some cases, social workers displayed considerable creativity in developing programmes that were useful and relevant. Even social workers like Buyi, who seemed to be overwhelmed and distressed by the difficult nature of the work, showed commitment to their work and a desire to what was best for their clients.

In telling their stories, social workers often described just how difficult it was to work in informal settlements. This forms the theme of the next chapter which examines these difficulties and the ways in which social workers cope.

CHAPTER EIGHT

WORKING IN INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS: “IT’S SO DIFFICULT”

Chikanda (1988:3) commented that “when one looks at social work research in a particular society during a particular period, one should be able to discern what the atmosphere was during that time, especially in the welfare area or in related fields”. Chapter Three highlighted the challenges facing social work as a whole in present day South Africa and provided the context for understanding the experiences of social workers in informal settlements. This chapter examines more closely the experiences of social workers in informal settlements within this broader context. The narratives of the social workers interviewed for this study vividly captured the prevailing atmosphere that Chikanda (1988) referred to and the personal experiences of social workers working in informal settlements. Often told with a wry sense of humour and much laughter, the stories nevertheless attested to the severe difficulties facing social workers who work in informal settlements.

A recurring theme throughout the interviews with social workers and during the workshop was the stressful nature of social work in informal settlements. Phrases such as “it’s not easy” and “it’s so difficult” were common. Stress resulted from problems in two broad areas – one, the actual working conditions in informal settlements, and, two, the organisational constraints facing social workers. In addition, it appeared that many social workers felt ill prepared for their work in informal settlements and that existing theory was not helpful to them. This chapter begins with an examination of the conditions in informal settlements that are stressful to social workers and then goes on to examine the organisational constraints that impact negatively on social workers. In the third section, issues of education and training, and whether theories and techniques which social workers learned at university adequately prepared them for practice are examined.

Despite the many difficulties, social workers found ways to cope with the challenges that faced them and in the words of one social worker, they “loved” their work in informal settlements. This chapter thus integrates these positive experiences and ways of coping as a counterpoint to the negative aspects.

CONDITIONS IN INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS

Chapter Four on informal settlements and Chapter Five on Bhambayi provide a detailed exposition of conditions in informal settlements. In this section, I examine how these conditions impact specifically on social work practice in these areas.

Physical conditions in informal settlements

“Its quite a pretty place – it is in a big valley with like cliffs and there's a river and its very pretty but there is nothing there and all the children are playing on the rubbish dump” (Pam)

The contrasting ideas – beauty and squalor existing side by side - contained in this description of an informal settlement sum up the physical nature of many of the informal settlements in which social workers worked. In many cases, the geographic setting was pleasant. However, it was the poor infrastructural conditions within the settlements that had a negative impact on social work services.

Inadequate roads hamper access and social workers told stories of having to walk long distances to find people. One social worker, Nqobile, had to park her car half way down a hill, walk to the bottom, take off her shoes and cross a stream and walk up the hill on the other side in order to do a home visit (3). Two social workers, Nombuso and Nokulunga, told stories of their cars getting stuck in ditches and having to ask nearby residents to help them recover their vehicles.

Poor roads also meant that social workers were dependent on fine weather to access informal settlements. When it rained, some roads were impassable and the social worker was unable to go into the informal settlement. Krishni gave an example of how frustrating this could be. She was allocated specific days of the week when she had access to the agency car in order to visit the informal settlement. For six weeks that day fell in the middle of a three day rainy spell and the social worker was unable to visit. Work on projects was thus held up for six weeks.

The lack of resources in informal settlements was also a frustration for social workers. While most social workers had access to a building, such as a library or clinic, they could use while in the informal settlement, one social worker, Fikile, found herself conducting group work with a group of young people outdoors – they collected large stones which they used as chairs. This worked satisfactorily when it was fine weather but when it was windy (Durban is a coastal city and wind is common and indeed, welcome on hot, humid summer days) or rainy, it was impossible to have the group. It also impacted considerably on the types of group activities that could be done – filling in a worksheet, for example, was very difficult with papers flying away, getting dusty and dirty, and having nothing to press on.

The experience of violence and danger

"I have been hijacked twice, in the same informal settlement. Both times I was in the work car. The first time, I stopped at a yield sign and this guy put his hand into the car and opened the door and yanked me out. The second time, they had knives and guns and when they said get out I got out and just ran. I was waiting for the shot in my back but I couldn't help it, I just ran. You know, I am more angry than scared. How dare they do that to me? I am scared that if I give in to the fear, I will never be able to carry on with social work. My family worry though. My husband is also a social worker, so he sort of understands but my parents are always worrying and want me to get another job." (Geetha)

Violence, unrest and fears of safety have been reported as sources of stress for South African social workers (Ross and Fridjhon, 1995) but little research about the incidence of violence affecting social workers has been reported. Letsebe (1995), writing in the South African context, reported that social workers came into contact with violence in their personal lives as members of the communities in which they lived but also within the context of their employing organisations and in the course of their duties as social workers. Her research results indicated that social workers had been victimised and had had their vehicles forcibly removed from them. British research suggests that a surprisingly large number of social workers are attacked in the course of their work and that welfare workers (together with teachers and nurses) were three times more likely to be attacked or verbally abused than the average employee (Balloch, Pahl and McLean, 1998).

In this sample of social workers, seven social workers (32% of the total) had been directly affected by violent crimes within the informal settlements in which they worked. Incidents included hijacking (as in the above example) and muggings during which personal belongings had been forcibly removed from the social workers. Two of the organisations that were represented in the study had had their offices held up at gun- point during working hours and staff had been forced to hand over jewellery and money.

The female social workers reported that they felt very vulnerable especially as they usually travelled alone. However, the fear of working in informal settlements did not escape the male social workers who spoke of having to be careful, to take precautions such as keeping windows closed and not travelling too slowly thus making themselves vulnerable to hijackers.

Even social workers who had not been directly affected by any violent incident, felt the strain of working under these circumstances. Krishni described the strain as follows: *"You are always on the look out – you know some areas are more*

dangerous so you are extra careful. It wears you down after a while"

This concern about the danger associated with work in informal settlements elicited a lively discussion during the workshop. Many of the participants expressed feelings about wanting to work in informal settlements but also feeling that they just could not cope and in some cases, were very near the end of their tether. Residents of informal settlements who were present at the workshop were very apologetic on behalf of their communities and said that while they understood how social workers felt, social workers should not withdraw their services because of this. They pointed out that they, too, were "victims" of crime and violence in their communities and that social workers should understand this.

It was important, community leaders said, to enlist the support of the community and community leaders. Social workers agreed and several examples from the interviews confirm this. Ben commented that he always tried to travel with community members if he was visiting particularly notorious areas. Nombuso laughingly explained that: *"It is really a case of like making friends with the people in the community and making sure that people know who you are. That makes it hard for them to be horrible to you!"*

Evidence from the interviews suggested that social workers drew on their inner resources to cope with the difficulties of working in informal settlements and especially the fear of being hurt. One of these was their faith. Ross (1996) found that a total of 17.9% of the social workers in her study said that a belief in a Higher Power and religious activities helped them cope with occupational stress. Five social workers (22.7% of this study) also talked about how their faith helped them in the course of their work. Ben described how he prayed for protection and guidance when going into areas that he knew were unsafe and that he had, *"learned to walk in faith"* while Nqobile said, *"I just pray I am okay"*.

Several social workers commented that there was a spiritual dimension to their

work. Zanele believed that she had been “called” to be a social worker and that God wanted her to do the work she was doing. She therefore trusted Him to protect her. Similarly, Christine felt a strong sense of God’s protection and had felt it was, *“inconceivable that anything could happen to me”*. She jokingly added that she knew this might be the ultimate denial but felt it did help her to cope!

Other social workers coped by adopting a philosophical attitude towards their work and expressed an attitude of “what will be, will be”. These social workers said that they simply did not dwell on the dangers or difficulties of working in informal settlements. Nokwazi summed it up as follows: *“If something happens, it happens.”*

Thandi felt that: *“Somebody has got to do it, somebody has got to go in andthere is always going to be a bad element or something, You can’t spend your life worrying about it”*. In a similar vein, Pam commented that one could hijacked in an up market suburb or in the centre of town, so why spend energy worrying about what might happen.

Most social workers said that they were sensible and that they took as many precautions as possible to ensure their safety. Informing their colleagues of where they were, driving with windows closed and doors locked, being alert to who was around and asking community leaders to accompany them to high risk areas were some of the precautions taken.

In addition to concerns about violence and danger, cultural differences posed particular problems for social workers.

Cultural differences

“Culture” is a concept that is commonly used but difficult to define. It refers to the fact that different groups of people adopt different ways of structuring their behaviour and of understanding their world. They have different customs and

traditions that help give meaning to their lives and they differ in their essential view of the human condition (Devore and Schlesinger, 1996). In this study, three particular aspects of culture presented problems for social workers. The first was related to notions of time, the second to cultural practices that impacted on social work services and the third on issues of race and language.

NOTIONS OF TIME

One way in which cultures differ is related to concepts of time. Western cultures tend to value clock determined and linear notion of time whereas traditional African cultures define time in relation to the natural rhythms and cycles of time (Diller, 1999). One of the most difficult things for all the social workers, not only the non-Zulu speaking social workers, was this notion of time. "African time" has come to be an accepted facet of life in South Africa and means that it is to be expected that African people will be late for meetings and that community functions in African communities will start later than the stated time. In a world dominated by deadlines and appointments, it becomes very difficult to accommodate "African time".

It was extremely frustrating for social workers to plan their day around appointments only to find that meetings seldom started on time (and therefore seldom finished on time). This meant that other appointments had to be re-scheduled causing further delays and frustrations. Another frustration sometimes arose when clients were referred, for example, to lawyers, who worked on a strict appointment system. The client would come late, sometimes even two or three days late and be very upset at not being attended to. Explaining to clients that being on time for court appearances was also frustrating. Clients would argue that they end up having to sit there all day so why hurry to be on time? However, if they were not there when the case was called, the case would be postponed.

TRADITIONAL AND CULTURAL PRACTICES

Reluctance to talk about certain problems was also seen to be cultural issue.

This was particularly evident in child abuse cases. Nombuso said: *"The problem here in is they don't want to talk about it- I think it is a cultural thing."* Similarly, Thandi explained: *"Its like you mustn't tell outsiders."* Social workers received referrals from the clinics, hospitals and schools but often found it very difficult to give attention to these cases. In many cases, there would be an admission that there had been a problem accompanied by an insistence that outside help was not required. Social workers could not gain access to these families in order to offer help and to protect the child.

The explanations given by some families for the abuse was also of concern to some social workers. Nombuso described how families would sometimes say that the cause of the child abuse was that the child had upset the ancestors. They would then conduct a ceremony to appease the ancestors and believe that the problem was now resolved. They did not therefore see the point of further therapy. Pam found this practice very difficult to cope with: *"They say its okay, but it is not. The perpetrator is still there so it is not okay for the child"*. She felt strongly that *"the child doesn't even understand the ceremony half the time"* but because the adults felt they had taken action, the child had to fit in. As a White social worker, she found herself to be in a difficult position – if she questioned these types of cultural practices she was afraid of being labelled racist.

In other cases, the perpetrator paid *"inhlawulo"*. This refers to a tradition where the boy (or the boy's family) who makes a girl pregnant pays a sum of money to the girl's father to compensate him for the loss of his daughter's virginity, which is highly prized in traditional society. This practice would seem to have been extended to the area of child abuse and once paid, the perpetrator seemingly has no further responsibility. This meant that families were reluctant to press charges. Receiving a cash payment, in any event, was for many poor families, better compensation than a court case.

Nombuso pointed out that these practices and ceremonies did not help in the

long term. She felt that many of the children continued to present problems, including poor school performance and anti-social behaviour. She knew of one case where the perpetrator had been involved in the ceremony, had paid “damages” but continued to abuse the child. Like the White social worker described above, she too found it very difficult to deal with such cases, not because she might be labelled racist but because *“it is almost impossible to argue against culture”*. In an environment where people are economically deprived and where the family is dependent on the perpetrator for survival it is perhaps easier to interpret the abuse in terms of cultural beliefs, rather than face the consequences of dealing with the abuse using the present protocols.

Social workers related how difficult it was to take action against the perpetrator in cases where the family were dependent on him financially. This sometimes caused a dilemma for the social worker – should a child be removed from the care of a mother who was doing her best to protect and care for her and where such removal would result in hardship for the whole family. Pam explained: *“The mother had as many protective measures in place but that couldn’t take away the fact that this man was there and he was helping the family financially and that whole economic support was an issue.”* For her, it was a case of hoping that the mother and child would be strong enough to prevent further abuse.

Velaphi felt that culture was sometimes used to excuse inappropriate behaviour. In such cases, it needed to be challenged. He related the case of a nine year old girl who was being “kept” by a 35 year man. The man argued that it was his custom to have many wives and that it was within his rights to have a child –wife. This social worker felt strongly that this needed to be challenged and that the child’s rights to be a child were paramount. The constitution of South Africa and the Child Care Act No 74 of 1983 define a child as a person under the age of 18 years and South Africa is a signatory to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. We therefore have a legal obligation to ensure that children’s rights are protected. Intervening in such cases is however difficult when issues

are clouded by so-called cultural rights. The social worker also felt that many White and Indian social workers were too afraid to confront these types of situations because they were afraid of being labelled racist, a further indication of how difficult it is to intervene appropriately. The dangers of not intervening were highlighted by Dominelli (1999) when she quoted examples of black children in Britain who had died because white social workers had been unable to challenge certain child care practices and the parents inability to treat their children appropriately.

Much the same thing applied in wife abuse situations when men argued that it was their culture to physically discipline their wives. In Chapter Six, I discussed how "*illobola*" is used to bring about marriage in traditional African society. The payment of "*illobola*" entitles the man to the woman's domestic and sexual favours and carries with it a notion of "owning" the woman. In talking about her work with a group of abused women referred to in the previous chapter, Geetha related how their partners had tried to sabotage the group because they objected to their wives rejection of the notion that they "belonged" to their husbands who could do what they liked with them. They had threatened their wives with further beatings should they continue the programme and at one point, the social worker herself felt that she might be putting herself and the women in danger by continuing with the programme. However, the women encouraged her to continue and it would appear that in time, the situation improved.

ISSUES OF RACE AND LANGUAGE

In its broadest sense, culture also includes issues of race and language of people and how these influence the worldview of people. These two issues were discussed by most of the social workers in this study. Sometimes being a White social worker in the community brought problems. Pam explained that it was so obvious when she visited a home, she stood out like a "*sore thumb*"! Everyone then knew that the family had a problem. While this was not always problematic, in one particular case of child abuse it caused enormous embarrassment to the

child concerned and she asked Pam not to visit her at home.

Pam also related how embarrassed she felt when African clients called her "madam". No matter how often she invited them to call her by her first name, they persisted in calling her "madam". She said she thought this was a mark of respect for her but felt very uncomfortable with the notion of a madam-servant relationship that the form of address implied. By putting themselves in the subordinate position vis-a-vis the social worker, clients accepted a dependent position and this made encouraging independent thought and action difficult. Because of the clients' deep-seated ways of relating to Whites as superior, this social worker found it difficult to establish an equal partnership with her clients.

A further problem associated with being a White or Indian social worker in an informal settlement was the perception in some cases, that they were better than African social workers and had more to offer in terms of resources. Social workers felt that this was probably related to socio-political conditions in the country where White and Indian people have more of the wealth than Black people. As pointed out in Chapter Three, welfare services historically favoured White people (and Indian people) and it might have been this experience of the past that led to this perception. Other social workers thought it might be related to people's experiences of pensions and grant pay-outs where people were treated poorly by African government officials who were not social workers. This is a controversial generalisation but was nevertheless the subjective perception of the social workers who made these comments. Social workers who found themselves in this position felt very uncomfortable as they did not, in fact, have more resources to offer. It also led to difficult working relationships in one instance when community members preferred an Indian social worker to her Black colleague.

Interestingly, most of the English speaking social workers felt that language was not a serious problem. None of them spoke isiZulu fluently although a number

stated that they understood quite a lot and were able to initiate a conversation in isiZulu. Pam and Krishni both related how this helped them in the relationship building process – community members appreciated their attempts to speak isiZulu and were always happy to correct her pronunciation and to tell her new words. Reshma, adopting a rather romanticised notion of language, said: *“it is the language in your heart that people understand, more than the language from your lips”*. What she was trying to convey was that it was her attitude towards people that was expressed in her non-verbal behaviour that was more important than her being able to speak the language.

Christine agreed with the Bhambayi community leaders that being able to communicate with people in their own language was important. Not understanding the language meant that she missed much of what people meant. Like other social workers, she usually used people from the community as interpreters when this was necessary. However this was not without its problems. What was interpreted was the interpreter’s interpretation of what was said, not actually what was said. She related an incident in which she observed a heated discussion between various people in a meeting and the interpretation was that there was a slight problem (*“slight my foot, it was a huge problem!”* was her comment) that had now resolved. She nevertheless felt that she was able to cope in a positive way with the language issue and that it did not have a major negative effect on her work.

Relationships between social workers and community members

It had long been held that the social work relationship is at the heart of the helping process. The quality of relationship is the result of a number of factors. Community leaders in Bhambayi (Chapter Six) indicated that they would prefer (and thus relate better to) a social worker with certain qualities. These qualities included trustworthiness, fairness, and modesty. Social workers in this study found that certain factors related to community members impacted on their ability to establish positive relationships with some people and these are now

discussed.

UNREALISTIC EXPECTATIONS

Some social workers experienced frustration at the community's unrealistic expectations of what social work could achieve. Most of these social workers said that they were aware from the beginning that this could be a problem and that during the entry phase they had been careful to explain the organisation's policy and to set the boundaries regarding what they could offer. Despite this, complaints about social workers centred on their inability to meet immediate needs for food, clothing, school fees and the like and social workers were aware that they were not meeting the felt needs of their clients.

Sometimes social workers put themselves in a difficult situation by the way in which they introduced their services to the community. Sheryl explained how the organisation for which she worked held a community meeting in an informal settlement and asked them their needs. The need identified was for literacy classes. However, this was not within the constitution of the organisation and the organisation had considerable difficulty firstly, in persuading its own constituents that this is what it should do, and secondly, in persuading the community to modify its proposal to better fit the constitution.

How one responds to requests for assistance can also cause problems. Social workers sometimes used words such as "I'll try" or "I'll see what I can do" because they did not want to disappoint people and because they truly intended to make enquiries about what could be done. However, community members could interpret these words as, "Yes, I will help you". When the social worker was unable to help, it was interpreted as not keeping promises.

The lack of education and experience of leaders also impacted negatively on relationships with social workers. Greta commented, "*They are clueless. They have no idea of what is possible given the situation*". Ben gave an example of

how when planning a community project the social worker would suggest it be focussed and limited to a specific area. This was usually because funding was limited. Community leaders however, would want the project to be expanded and to include neighbouring areas and seemed to have difficulty in understanding why this was not possible. Community leaders also had little understanding of the costs involved in projects and budgeting was often a problem.

In some cases, problems arose when community leaders tried to use the social worker for their own purposes. One community leader insisted that the social worker remove two children whose mother had died to a children's home rather than organise for an unmarried aunt to move in and care for them. It later became evident that the community leader had promised the dead woman's shack to a friend and the social workers efforts to keep the children in the community frustrated his attempts to benefit financially from the situation.

Difficulties also arose when community members asked for favours, such as borrowing the car to move furniture or taking people shopping. Ben had had this experience and while he felt within his rights to refuse such requests, he was left feeling uneasy and was of the opinion, that community members were not satisfied with his response.

At the workshop, social workers and residents of informal settlements identified this issue of differing expectations as a problem. Residents of informal settlements pointed out that informal settlements did not have a history of social work service provision. People may have heard stories about what social workers did but for many, they simply did not know what to expect. Workshop participants felt that it was particularly important to clarify the mission of the organisation and to be clear about what the organisation could offer. Communities would then be free to accept or eject this. It was not helpful to go to a community and ask what they wanted and then say it was not possible because that was not within the

constitution of the organization as happened in the example given above by Sheryl.

Weyers (1997) suggested that one way of doing this could be to use social marketing strategies. The role of the social worker and the mission of the organisation could be publicised by addressing community rallies and special events and by holding exhibitions. It was also important to be honest about what could be achieved and not to make any promises that could not or might not be kept.

The usefulness of the workshop in achieving a better shared understanding of social work was illustrated by one person who commented to me that it was only now after the workshop that he actually realised what social work was all about. Although he had worked with social workers in his community for several years and liked them, he had never been really sure of what they were doing. The workshop had clarified many of the things that had puzzled him. For example, he had often wondered why the social worker could only come on certain days and meetings always had to be arranged to suit the social worker. He had felt it was a bit unfair that they always had to accommodate her but now realised that the social worker had to work in other areas as well and had to share a car with other social workers. He had also thought that social workers decided on who got government grants but now realised that certain procedures had to be followed and that decisions were made administratively without any recommendation from the social worker. He had never had the courage to question these things and the social worker never knew that these were issues that concerned community leaders.

APATHY

What some social workers described as community apathy and a culture of entitlement was also a concern. Social workers commented that this could be, in part, due to disillusionment with promises made and not kept by government,

local authorities and previous development agencies which then impacted on the credibility of the welfare organisation. Exacerbating the problem was also the feelings of powerlessness that had developed over years of oppression and deprivation. While social workers showed insight into why these sorts of problems existed, it was nevertheless tiring to always be confronted with these issues.

This issue also received attention during the workshop and workshop participants agreed that it was important to analyse this in greater depth. Apathy for most workshop participants had a negative connotation and labelling a community “apathetic” implied a judgement. What seemed like apathy might be something else. The possible explanations for this so-called “apathy” and suggestions for how this could be dealt with are summarised in the following table:

Table 16: Causes of apathy and possible solutions

EXPLANATION	POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS
Scepticism – Past experience of being let down	Be faithful and consistent Same social worker would work in area for several years – do not <i>“chop and change social workers”</i> Be patient as community may <i>“test”</i> social worker's sincerity
Unrealistic expectations on part of community	Target powerful people in community and explain role of social worker and organisation Address community meetings Address development forums
Unrealistic expectations on part of the social workers	Understand people have different priorities
Feelings of helplessness	Promote self esteem Ensure that people are included in projects from the beginning Have faith in people and communicate this to them

LEADERSHIP ISSUES

The difficulty in identifying community leaders and the challenges this poses during the entry phase of work was illustrated vividly by Velaphi. He described how he had tried for nearly a year to gain entry to a very depressed and poverty stricken area – exactly the kind of area that the White Paper for Welfare (1997) suggested should receive priority. He initiated contact with the elected local councillor only to find that he was not well liked in the area. When he tried to speak to other leaders, they refused to speak to him because he had spoken to “that one” first. All attempts to bring the various parties together failed and the

organisation withdrew its services from this area.

Further problems revolved around changing leadership structures. Krishna expressed her frustration at spending time establishing relationships with one group of community leaders only to find that six months later that group had been “overthrown” and a new group had been installed. Projects would then be delayed as negotiations took place with the new group.

In some cases, community leaders did not do their jobs. Pam described a community leader who was in charge of a creche but was seldom there. The children were left unattended and the community leader was, in fact, causing much discontent in the informal settlement. However, because of this woman’s powerful position as a community leader, parents of the children felt too afraid to complain.

Some social workers felt that community leaders sometimes saw social workers as being in competition with them. It seemed that they felt that the social worker would prove to be more popular than them and would undermine their position of authority in the area.

ETHICAL DILEMMAS

Several social workers also experienced ethical dilemmas relating to differing moral standards within informal settlements. In some cases, clients were known to be involved in illegal activities such as the dagga trade. Zulu (1991) pointed out that in many impoverished communities, illegal activities became morally sanctioned by the community. For many clients, such activities were their only source of income and social workers understood this. At the same time, however, the social workers were aware that dagga abuse was the cause of many other problems that they were having to address. Young people were not going to school and spending their days smoking. It was also felt that it was often these youngsters that were responsible for thefts in the informal settlements. It was

apparent that social workers did not report these cases to the authorities and “turned (an uneasy) blind eye!”

One social worker (identity withheld to protect identity of social worker) gave an example of a particular dilemma. It related to knowledge about a baby who had been buried in a yard under suspicious circumstances – had the baby really died from natural causes at birth or had the baby being killed? The social worker did nothing but felt most disturbed by the incident. A number of factors appeared to influence this decision. Firstly, the relationship between the police and many informal settlements seems to be problematic and the social worker was concerned that reporting the matter might jeopardise an already tenuous social work relationship with the community. Secondly, the social worker had no definite evidence, only a suspicion and felt that making such a serious accusation against someone would cause huge problems if it were not true. Thirdly, the social worker also had doubts about the sensitivity with which the police would investigate the case and was afraid that indiscriminate arrests would be made, people would be abused and relationships between the police and the community would further deteriorate. Finally, making an anonymous report would protect the social worker, but would cast suspicion on neighbours and cause conflict within the community. This incident illustrates the difficult position in which social workers might find themselves and the challenges of making ethically correct decisions when faced with so many uncertainties.

NEGATIVE IMAGES OF SOCIAL WORKERS

Some social workers had experienced difficulties in establishing relationships with communities because of the negative image of social workers in some of these communities. Nombuso said the previous social worker had been: “.... *the wrong social worker. She did not care for the people and treated them very harshly. The people thought I would be like her and it was hard to get their trust.*”

Zanele described how the frequent staff turnover at her organisation impacted

negatively on her work, especially in the beginning stages. People were, at times, openly hostile and asked her how long she intended to stay. Any suggestions she made about possible projects were greeted with “we can’t do that because we know you are going to go soon”. She said it had been very difficult to gain the trust of community members under these circumstances.

This issue also received considerable attention at the workshop as residents of informal settlements told their stories of how badly social workers behaved. Some of these stories related to what appeared to be unprofessional conduct on the part of the social worker. One community leader from an informal settlement said the social worker used the organisation’s car to buy groceries over the weekend, but refused, in the course of her work, to take an ill person to hospital. The excuse was not, as one might have expected, that because of insurance implications it was against agency policy to transport people, but that this would result in clients becoming dependent on the social worker and the aim of the social worker was to “empower” people. This was certainly an abuse of the term “empower” and one wonders how not helping an ill person to access health care is empowering?

Another story told by a resident of an informal settlement revolved around a case in which a mother approached a social worker with the request that her teenage daughter be placed in residential care. The social worker explained that this was not policy and said that the child would be placed in a family preservation programme that meant that a social worker and child care worker would visit the home regularly and help the family cope with the problems. An arrangement was made that the mother would meet the social worker at the entrance to the informal settlement at a particular time. The mother waited several hours in vain and when she phoned the organisation, she was told that the social worker concerned was on leave. The community leader who told this story said that this incident had happened several months previously and that they were still waiting for the social worker.

Yet a further example of a broken promise, involved a social worker who started a club for the elderly and had them register with an organisation with the promise that they would then receive regular food parcels. They paid their registration fees but had never received any food parcels. The excuse, according to the social worker, was that money for food parcels had run out.

In some cases, residents of informal settlements felt that they were used by social workers. One story involved a community organiser bringing the press to the informal settlement and taking photos of a resident's private vegetable garden. The next day there was an article in the newspaper about a non-existent community project with the picture of the private garden. The person who told this story said that the person concerned won a community prize for her so called efforts in uplifting the community.

Social workers who were present at the workshop shook their heads in disbelief in response to these stories and the non-verbal response was one of frustration and anger. One social worker pointed out that this explained how social work got a bad name – people tended to remember these negative experiences and all social workers were then "*tarred with the same brush*". Another commented that communities should not accept this kind of behaviour and that it was their right to receive a professional and competent service. Such social workers, she felt, should be reported to the South African Council for Social Service Professions for Unprofessional Conduct. As described in Chapter Three, this is a statutory body which regulated the social work profession and, among other things, is tasked with investigating allegations of unprofessional conduct. However, in a climate where residents of informal settlements already feel disempowered and have difficulty in meeting their needs and accessing what is their right, it is unlikely that they would take such steps.

Despite these horror stories about social workers, most residents of informal

settlements were positive about social workers and what they could do to help improve conditions in informal settlements. Particularly poignant to note was the comment made by one workshop participant who said that social workers brought “joy” to informal settlements. That someone was prepared to come to the informal settlement, make an effort to get to know the people and to help them was seen as a source of validation for them. It helped them to have a sense of hope for the future. Residents of Bhambayi had talked about their feelings of being abandoned and of feeling that others looked down on them (Chapter Six). Obviously residents of other informal settlements also experienced these feelings of alienation and appreciated being noticed. This was also consistent with van Schalkwyk’s (1997:129) findings that people in informal settlements “acknowledge and appreciate the efforts of agencies and people who reach out to facilitate them in their developmental efforts”.

So far, much of the discussion of informal settlements has focussed on the negative aspects – the problems and the difficulties. During the course of this study, however, a number of strengths within informal settlements were identified.

Strengths within informal settlements

From the residents’ points of view, living in informal settlements had several advantages. One major one was that housing was free and that they did not have to pay rates. This was interesting to note in view of the fact that development is taking place in many informal settlements and that payment for services will become a reality for residents of these areas. Turner (1976) warned that housing development schemes did not always meet the needs of the poor for this very reason. While housing might be more formal and therefore look better, poor people did not have the resources to maintain the home and to pay for supplies and services.

Some residents also believed that living in an informal settlement was what they

described as a *“stepping stone”* to something better. Several residents felt that through their involvement in development and upgrading they were gaining skills that would be useful in the long term. Their willingness to learn was identified by some participants as another strength. One resident of an informal settlement described this trait as *“trainability”*.

The resilience and perseverance of residents of informal settlements was identified as a strength, mainly by the social workers. They were of the opinion that people who lived in informal settlements had coped with and do cope with very difficult situations. These included all the problems that have already been identified in the thesis. Despite this, people survived, people worked together, people helped each other and most importantly, people still had fun and enjoyed life. The social workers who participated in the workshop voiced great admiration and respect for this.

Participants, both social workers and residents of informal settlements, also identified *“ubuntu”* as a strength. Ubuntu is the notion that we are people through other people and that we experience our humanity through our relationships with others. Even in informal settlements where there was conflict and violence, there were still groups of people who cared about each other and people believed in the vision of *“ubuntu”*. Similarly, respondents in van Schalkwyk’s (1997) study pointed out that one of their strengths was that they wanted to live in peace with each other and had a vision of a better life.

There were also many people in informal settlements who had important and useful skills. These included indigenous knowledge such as which herbs and plants could be used for ailments, as well as traditional crafts. People also had organisational skills as they were able to establish creches, organise clubs and establish development committees and forums. Social workers felt that these were important strengths that could be built on.

ORGANISATIONAL CONSTRAINTS

One of the frustrations for many of the social workers who participated in this study were the difficult organisational conditions under which they worked. Many felt that their need for affirmation as professionals was not being met and this impacted on their sense of self worth. These are probably common difficulties that many social workers in to-day's climate face and are not peculiar to those working in informal settlements. Social constructionism places emphasis on understanding the context which influences how people experience reality. The organisational constraints facing social workers impacted considerably on how they experienced their work as social workers.

Physical working conditions

The social workers who participated in this research generally worked in physical conditions that were far from ideal and the general impression was that social workers were harassed. Shared offices were the norm with social workers often having to find an empty room in which to interview clients (and me). This resulted in them knocking at doors to see if the occupant was in and if not, the room could then be used for the interview. As described in the previous chapter, one interview took place in the playroom while the social worker concerned cared for an abandoned baby waiting for his mother to arrive. Ten interviews (45% of the total) were interrupted by telephone calls or by colleagues asking for mundane things such as paper clips, telephone numbers and file numbers. In some cases, social workers apologised for the state of their offices - every available surface, including the floors were covered with files and paper. Fikile explained that she was too scared to file anything in case she forgot the case. Seeing the file would remind her that it needed attention. Buyi explained that she was so overwhelmed with work that she did not get time to do filing.

If these conditions were unsatisfactory, they were not nearly as bad as one group of social workers who worked out of a container. Small offices that barely held a

small desk and a bookcase were on the perimeter of the container while the central section was used both as a waiting room for clients and a meeting room. During one of my visits to this office, a training session for volunteers was in progress making it almost impossible to carry on a conversation in any of the offices. A further problem in this case was that there was no toilet for the social workers who either used the neighbouring creche's toilet or if the creche was closed, had to wait until they got home. One of the social workers ruefully complained *"I even got an infection because of that"*

High caseloads

Collings and Murray (1996) reported that the pressure involved in planning and reaching work targets and high workloads were significantly associated with stress among social workers. They specifically pointed out that too much administrative and paper work were sources of stress. Where there are staff shortages, the problem of high caseloads is exacerbated (Ross and Fridjhon, 1995). These types of problems were evident in this study and high caseloads were a source of great stress for the caseworkers. They reported caseloads ranging from 76 to 200. This is not just a local problem unique to work in informal settlements. In a survey of social workers in a nation wide faith based child and family welfare organisation it was found that social workers deal with 75 families at any one time and that approximately 63% of these cases involve statutory work. On average, social workers deal with between 18 and 20 court enquiries per week (Personal communication with Pienaar, 2001).

Nombuso explained just how difficult it was to deal with such a high caseload: *"You find that ... on your appointment days you have to see about 12 people in one day and that means recording, that means the home visits, so it's like I don't know. I mean it's practically impossible to do everything. We still have to do stats on top of this huge casework. You still have to do stats, you have to fill your diary everyday, there is so much pressure, so much paper work."*

In a working day of eight hours it is difficult to imagine how this social worker managed to cope with her workload. The quality of services must be severely compromised under these circumstances and the consequences of such high caseloads are far reaching. In the first place, it is well nigh impossible to do anything else given these high caseloads and pressure on social workers to do group work, community work and to engage in developmental social work seems absurd. Thandi commented, in what appeared to be an understatement, *"it's actually very hard to do community work cause I'm so inundated with my cases"*.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, Pam had ideas for community projects in the informal settlement in which she worked. She really believed that she had the skills and that the community would respond positively, but she wondered if she ever would be successful because of her high caseload.

A further consequence of high caseloads was that social workers felt they were not doing anything properly. This led to a lack of feelings of accomplishment and pride in their work. Examples of what social workers felt were, *"You wish like that you can do more ...but you can't"* (Nombuso) and *"You feel like you literally sticking a plaster on the thing"* (Fikile).

Children and families who needed counselling and supportive services were neglected because the emphasis was always on crisis intervention and statutory work. Buyi's story in the previous chapter highlighted the dangers of inadequate follow up and supportive services. In many cases, Buyi only became aware of problems when statutory reports were due and it was often too late then to offer meaningful assistance. Had problems been identified earlier, they might have been easier to resolve.

Buyi's story illustrated how clients can be neglected and how the quality of services can be compromised and this reflects a national problem. The South African Council for Social Service Professions has expressed concern that a

number of cases of unprofessional and/or improper conduct were a result of the extremely demanding circumstances under which social workers were expected to work. One of the ways in which it plans to deal with this is to establish minimum standards regarding work loads.

Coping with a high caseload and being expected to engage in all methods of social work caused some discontent. Nombuso explained that: *"I have to do case work, recruitment of foster parents, training, orientation, you name it, group work, you name it, I have to do it"*. Fikile thought that social workers should specialise within teams and described how it worked elsewhere: *"At agency x, they divide their workers into teams and each person has a specific role. Some do statutory work only, others do development only. Us? We do everything"*.

Interestingly, one of the organisations that worked in teams where social workers could specialise in one area of work, was thinking of changing. Ameena who was a community worker at this organisation said, *"I don't know how it is going to work. I can barely keep up with what I have to do in the informal settlement and now I am going to be expected to carry a caseload as well!"*

The expectation that social workers should work in an integrated manner needs to be reconsidered. The integrated approach arose from attempts to overcome the specialised methods approach to social work and encourages social workers to focus on the total problem situation. Gray and Bernstein (1994) suggested that integrated practice was a misnomer because in practice, social workers have not found a way to work at an individual, group and community level all at the same time. Similarly, Dominelli (1996:196) was of the opinion that "responding to individual needs while addressing the structural issues present in any one situation may call for greater specialisation within the team". The team, rather than the individual, thus works in an integrated manner.

Supervision as a source of stress

Social work literature describes supervision as having three functions – administrative, educative and supportive (Kadushin, 1992). Administrative functions include tasks such as co-ordinating, planning, organising, controlling, policy planning, evaluation and allocating organisational resources. Educative functions refer to activities such as instructing, advising, training, development and enhancement of self awareness that are designed to transmit professional knowledge and skills. Supportive functions revolve around maintaining the supervisee's motivation, morale, commitment, resolving dissatisfactions, mitigating against stress, and preventing burnout (Kadushin, 1992).

Many of the social workers in this study described how emotionally draining their work was. Thandi explained how exhausting she found her work: *"Sometimes I feel that I'm very, very tired. Like if I've done home visits, I can't do anything when I come back. I just sit and relax. I can't work. I'm exhausted, tired, hungry... and short tempered!"*

Also describing how emotionally draining her work could sometimes be, Fikile described how she was invited to a school concert and in the choir were a number of her child clients. Listening to them *"singing like angels"* and knowing that they might be dead in a few years from AIDS reduced her to tears: *"I couldn't help it, I just burst out crying. I couldn't stop. I just cried and cried"*.

Jenny reported how she burst out crying when a particularly difficult client told her *"f.... off"* while Andrea explained that at one stage she had been so stressed at work that she had started losing weight and needed medical attention.

Given the emotional nature of the work and the difficulties facing social workers in informal settlements, one would hypothesise that supportive supervision, as it is described in the literature would be helpful to social workers. Add to this the fact that the majority of social workers in this sample were young and

inexperienced, and the need for support becomes obvious. While some social workers had supportive supervisors, for others, supervision was a source of stress rather than support. A number of reasons for this were given. In reporting the experiences of social workers in this section, their identities are withheld to protect them from any possible repercussions.

FREQUENCY OF SUPERVISION

A lack of regular supervision was identified by some social workers as being a problem. One social worker explained: *"It is supposed to be once in two weeks, but I think I have been having it maybe once in three months"*. She therefore worked on her own for much of the time, making decisions without the benefit of consultation and guidance and without the opportunity to reflect on her work and evaluate the effectiveness of her practice. When supervision did occur, it was primarily administrative in nature. The supervisor would check on the caseload, check that recordings were up to date (which she said often were not complete) and sometimes give some guidance on how to proceed with a certain case.

ATTITUDES OF SUPERVISORS

The hypocritical attitude of some supervisors was a problem. Five social workers expressed anger that supervisors expected workers to do things that they themselves were not prepared to do. One particular incident caused much anger: *"....two of our workers where robbed at (an informal settlement) so from that incident, um, the supervisors were not quite keen to come to this side."* The supervisors nevertheless expected the social workers to continue working in the area. Two other social workers also expressed dismay that their supervisors had never been to the informal settlements where they worked despite invitations to do so. One social worker reported that she was incensed when her supervisor said she would not visit the informal settlement because she feared being hijacked.

Supervision was, for some, a time to be dreaded and feared because of the

authoritarian nature of their supervisors. Comments included:

"I know I am going to be yelled at because there's like half my files that I haven't recorded in and I haven't had time to look at this case".

"I'm dreading supervision now because ... like you try to explain to them I was at court this morning, I was in the area yesterday, I have got this tomorrow, I got court on Thursday, I have another court report to write, when am I supposed to see the other ten cases and then they will give you something in the morning and say this is a new case go sort it out. Like on Thursday I had ten school visits planned I had to cancel them all because I had to go and move a child and it takes the whole day".

These comments illustrate the frustration and guilt engendered by the emphasis on records and ensuring that files were up to date. Supervision in these cases, appeared to focus primarily on the recordings and not on the needs of the social worker or those of the clients. Not providing adequate guidance to especially inexperienced social workers or opportunities to explore client problems and courses of action in depth impacts on the standard of services. This may contribute, in some cases, to social workers being accused of unprofessional conduct.

What were described as petty rules were also a source of frustration for a number of social workers and were further evidence of the authoritarian nature of relationships within organisations. On pay-day, for example, social workers wanted to go to the bank at a nearby shopping centre to organise their finances but the short lunch break and the queues at that time of the month meant that they were sometimes late returning to the office. One social worker explained: *"If you are five, ten minutes late from your lunch, you are in trouble, even though you might have missed lunch three times that week!"*.

It seemed that the lack of trust and the lack of acknowledgement that they were

in fact working more than their designated working hours and doing their best hurt. One social worker said, *"Like you want to say to them, don't yell at me I'm doing my best"*.

In some cases, social workers felt that their supervisors were of the "old school". These were supervisors whose training involved mainly casework and who had little experience of working in communities. One social worker suggested that perhaps they felt threatened by the social workers knowledge and ability to work in informal settlements and rather than acknowledge this they played "power games". Another commented, *"Their training is out of date. They don't upgrade themselves and you come from college and they don't like it"*.

The change from a residual welfare model with an emphasis on remedial intervention to a developmental welfare model with an emphasis on community development work has clearly been difficult for some older and experienced social workers. The need for re-orientation and training has been recognised by the National Government and a pilot re-orientation programme has been completed. It remains now for this programme to be mainstreamed in order to reach greater numbers of social workers.

SUPERVISORS' EXPECTATIONS

A further problem related to the perception that supervisors had unrealistic expectations of what could be achieved in informal settlements. They expected deadlines to be met despite problems with access to informal settlements and expected projects to develop according to the estimated dates set by the organisation. This, social workers felt, was almost impossible given the conditions in informal settlements. One social worker described how it took him nearly a year to establish relationships with the community and to begin to understand the community dynamics. The organisation however expected the entire project to be completed within a year.

Some social workers felt that their supervisors had little understanding of their problems and needs. One social worker, battling to keep up with the administrative work involved in opening cases, commented: *"Don't tell my supervisor, but like a lot of the intake cases if they can be referred even if the child grant ones I don't always open those cases because then it is just too overwhelming. I tell them where to go, what documents they need. They are welcome to come back and see me, um, and then I make a note in a book but I don't always open the files. We should open the files because of stats so we are being pushed to but the paperwork is just too much"*.

Some African social workers who were supervised by Indian supervisors reported that they experienced problems in relation to cultural understandings. Three social workers explained that their supervisors needed to take into account cultural sensitivities when providing supervision and guidance on how to deal with cases. In child abuse cases, for example, many African families find it difficult to talk to a person outside the family about intimate family problems. In some cases social workers were successful in overcoming this barrier but in others, families simply refused follow up services. Supervisors blamed the social workers for this saying they were not trying hard enough or that their skills were insufficient and insisted that they pay another home visit. This left the social workers feeling demeaned and discouraged. It put them in the awkward position of returning to the family to be rejected once again and of once again having to report failure to their supervisors. It is possible that a supervisor of any race might have criticised the way in which these social workers were handling certain cases- that they interpreted this in racial and cultural terms illustrates the difficulties facing South African social workers as they learn to work together not only with clients, but also colleagues of different racial and cultural backgrounds.

The study results indicated that in many instances, supervisors were subverting the supervision process into a "means of controlling or instructing staff, instead of a means of developing staff" (Turner, in Lishman, 1998:98). While bureaucracies

can be useful in co-ordinating the activities of large organisations, problems arise “when bureaucratic methods are allowed to feed on themselves and to hamstring the service functions which deserve top priority” (Weinbach, 1998). It was clear from what social workers were saying that the bureaucratic style of management which was prevalent in their employing organisations was not conducive to positive working conditions. They believed that the emphasis on rules and on administrative aspects such as reports and files interfered with their ability to offer services to the clients and in some cases, it seemed that up to date records were, in fact, more important to the organisation than services to clients. More importantly though they felt that they were not being acknowledged and that their insights into how services should be offered were not taken into account.

Lack of funding for social work services

Further examples of how social workers felt impotent within their organisations related to funding issues. Unlike Reshma whose efforts to access funding were described in the previous chapter, many social workers had difficulties in this respect. Funding for community and group work programmes was often difficult to access and organisations were reluctant to make funds available. This angered some social workers who explained that the fact that services were rendered in informal settlements was used as a motivation for obtaining funding from private donors. This funding was then divided amongst all the organisation's projects.

There was also criticism regarding the low levels of government funding for social work services. Social workers pointed out that they were being expected to extend services with no increase in funding. At the time of the research, welfare organisations had not received a subsidy increase since 1996. Taking inflation into account, this effectively meant that welfare organisations were trying to maintain existing services and extend services to previously disadvantaged areas but with diminishing financial resources. As described in Chapter Three, macro-economic policies and the adoption of GEAR has impacted on social

spending. Interesting however, none of the social workers discussed this or indicated that they were aware of intersection between welfare and the economy. This is not surprising considering that 50% of respondents in a study by Sewpaul (2001) did not mention GEAR as a policy that was included in the social work curriculum. If such content and reflection on the micro-macro level links are not included in university social work curricula, it is unlikely that this will be dealt with in practice.

Greta and Krishni also commented on the effects of the closure of the local lottery that had financed many welfare organisations and projects. In terms of national legislation, this lottery was closed when the national lottery was set up. Despite the success of the lottery in monetary terms, there have been many delays in setting up procedures for the distribution of profits and welfare organisations have suffered financially because of this.

In general, social workers also felt that resources such as cell phones, and well serviced, reliable cars were essential but often welfare organisations were not in a position to provide these resources. While the community leaders in Bhambayi said that social workers should have well equipped offices with computers and the like, none of the social workers in the study mentioned the use of technology as a way of improving practice (and in no office did I see a computer). Considering that immediate and basic needs are not being met, social workers might not have even considered this. However, there are ways in which technology could be used. Macarov (in Davenport and Davenport, 1998) suggested that computers could be used in the following ways: Agency management, for example, in record keeping and filing. Case management, for example, in tracking client demographics and clinical data which would assist in planning. Access to the internet could provide a rich source of information regarding policy trends, statistics and research outcomes. Weinbach (1998) commented that the introduction of computers may be problematic in an organisation because of the impact they have on power relations. Computer

literate people are likely to be the younger, recent graduates who would normally have to wait a long while before obtaining power. Those who have earned status over a number of years may suddenly find themselves devalued and their knowledge and skills may seem obsolete. This observation is critical in view of the comments made by some social workers in this study, that their supervisors were of the “old school” and felt threatened by their ability to work within the new developmental paradigm. It can be expected that the implementation of technology might impact negatively on these relationships.

Social work salaries have also been affected by the lack of government funding as social work posts are subsidised. A number of social workers also complained about their low salaries and there was a feeling amongst these social workers that when a better opportunity presented itself they would not hesitate to take advantage of it. Nombuso explained how she had kept the part time weekend job she had as a student. This was because, on her salary, she could not afford to pay off her university loan.

Job satisfaction and congenial working conditions can, to an extent, mitigate against poor salaries, but when these other factors are missing, low salaries become a major issue. The prospect of earning much higher salaries overseas, especially in the United Kingdom, has prompted many social workers to leave South Africa resulting in a high turn-over of staff at social work organisations. Concern about the impact of this on service delivery has prompted the Joint Universities Council on Social Work Education to raise this issue with the Director- General of the Department of Social Development, the national department concerned with social work matters.

Lack of co-operation and poor co-ordination of services

Many social workers expressed much frustration at the poor co-operation they received from working with government departments. People applying for grants were badly treated and not given the correct information. This meant that clients

would have to return to the departments' offices several times before their applications were accepted. In some cases, clients were given incorrect information and became angry and frustrated when social workers tried to inform them of their rights and the correct procedures.

The justice system in particular came in for some heavy criticism. Problems included sitting all day at court and having the case postponed, missing dockets, and prosecutors and magistrates not understanding for example, the role of the mediator in child abuse cases.

Even referring clients for specialist services was not always successful. Many of these organisations did not have decentralised services and clients were often unable to afford the transport costs. There were also sometimes long waiting lists and clients lost interest in going for counselling.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIAL WORKERS

"The gap between knowledge generated by systematic inquiry and its eventual use by practitioners has been a concern in social work for several decades" (Staller and Kirk, 1998:91). In Chapter Three, I examined the difficulties social work has had in formulating a systematic and unified body of knowledge and whether this was, in fact, necessary or desirable. Research, as reviewed by Sheppard (1998), suggested that social workers either do not consciously draw on formal knowledge when conducting practice, that if they did it would be unlikely to make a difference or that they subconsciously assimilated knowledge that was then reflected in their approach to practice. For some social workers in this study some of their anxiety about their work in informal settlements was related to them not knowing how to approach their work in informal settlements. As Sheryl said: *"its like the blind leading the blind!"*

South African social workers have four years of university education before they may register and practice as a social worker. The relevance of this for practice, the relationship between theory and practice and whether social workers continue to learn and develop is examined in this section.

Relevance of university training

Research studies have documented how social workers have felt unprepared for the challenges facing social workers in South Africa. Ramphal and Moonilall (1993) found that social workers in the Durban region felt insecure about their ability to deal with the kinds of problems that they were facing in the field. McKendrick (1994) reported that in the Witwatersrand area, directors and chief social workers of social work organisations felt that new graduates were unprepared for the realities of practice. Similarly, social workers in van Schalkwyk's (1997) study felt that they lacked the skills to address the needs they were facing. Some social workers in this study also felt that they had not been adequately prepared to meet the demands of their work. Two examples which were representative of how a number of social workers felt were: "*Maybe group work was a bit helpful, otherwise, nothing prepared me for this*" (Nokwazi) and "*We did Egan, no offence to the guy, but it was not really helpful*" (Sheryl).

Several of the more experienced social workers were very scathing towards their university training. In response to a question about whether her training had prepared her for work in informal settlements, Krishni exclaimed: "*Good God, no!*"

Paul felt that experience had been the best teacher, and (with apologies to Oscar Wilde) commented: "*My education was interrupted by my schooling*". Paul had some particularly harsh words about how universities had been agents of the apartheid apparatus and how knowledge about problems facing South Africans such as poverty, violence and institutional discrimination was purposefully kept from students. He felt that the curriculum was very western based and that little consideration was given to African systems of knowledge. As described in

Chapter Three, this attention to western based models of social work has been criticised and questions have been asked about its relevance in an African context.

In contrast however, there were some social workers who felt that their university training was helpful and they felt able to use the knowledge they had gained in creative ways to help them in their practice. One of the more experienced social workers, Ben explained that while his training had focussed mainly on clinical work, it had, nevertheless, in important ways, prepared him for his work in informal settlements. Firstly, his group work experience had stood him in good stead. He explained: *"I did therapeutic groups in my training and the hardest thing I learned was how to get the group to take responsibility for itself - how to go into a group and how you can't always control the direction its going and sometimes you have to put them into a situation where they have to take responsibility for themselves as a group and once they do this you can help them"*.

Understanding group processes and being skilled in using these processes purposefully were important aspects of his work with community groups that were often conflictual. The second way in which his training had helped him was in learning to cope with uncertainty: *"(social work) helped me go into circumstances where I have no training and have no understanding and try and find a way!"*

One of the less experienced social workers, Ameena, also felt that while university might not have given her specific skills that were useful in informal settlements, it had been an invaluable time of learning and growing as a person. Learning about many different things, not only in the social work courses, but also in other courses, meeting all sorts of different people with different customs and ideas, and learning to have an open mind were the aspects of her university training that she treasured and which she felt helped prepare her for her work in informal settlements.

Only one social worker in the study sample, Christine, had a higher degree in social work. She said that while her undergraduate training was not very helpful in terms of working in an informal settlement, her master's degree gave her the opportunity to explore some of the issues in greater depth and this had helped her to conceptualise her practice. She had also done adult education courses and used many of the principles of adult education in her work.

Perhaps reflecting the changes that have taken place within the curriculum, some of the less experienced social workers were of the opinion that their university training had been very useful. A number of social workers had worked in informal settlements as part of their field practice courses. Nqobile commented: *"After you've worked as a student in (informal settlement) you can cope with anything. Where I am now is so peaceful and easy for me but others don't like it. They should go to (informal settlement) and then see!"*

Thandi, though, had had the opposite experience: *"The people in (informal settlement) were so nice, but the people here don't respect social workers"*. She nevertheless felt that her practical experience as a student had been helpful. Nombuso claimed that she knew all about informal settlements: *"I know all about informal settlements having worked in (informal settlement) not like my colleague here who is still battling to adapt!"*

Velaphi, who had also had some fieldwork practice experience in an informal settlement, suggested that all students should have a placement in an informal settlement during their practice courses. This was because: *"no amount of reading, talking can actually prepare you for what its like"*.

Pam had obviously really enjoyed her social work training. It was: *"brilliant and up to date"*. She was very loyal to her university saying that some of her colleagues from other universities had not been exposed to new theories, such as social

development and were thus finding it difficult to adjust to working within a developmental welfare paradigm.

Reshma said it was not so much what she had learned that had prepared her for practice, but the example of one of her lecturers. She explained: *"I had this fantastic lecturer and I've modelled myself quite a lot on her. She was super. I got the highest marks in her course on community work so I knew from the beginning that community work was my niche. I emulate her a lot."*

Some social workers said they were very aware of the importance of building relationships with clients and client groups in informal settlements and university training that concentrated on clinical work provided a good foundation for establishing positive relationships. Being aware of individual emotions was also important. Sheryl commented: *"Therapy can be kind of like walking in a field of emotions and attitudes and you have to help people work through these. I do the same in development work – you have to be aware of how people are feeling"*.

Social workers told stories of how they sometimes had to counsel community leaders about personal problems and that once these were satisfactorily resolved they noticed improved relationships within groups and more progress was then made. Being aware that personal problems and lack of skills impacted negatively on community development helped social workers to intervene in a more appropriate way. Understanding human behaviour in the social environment was mentioned by Velaphi as having been a very useful component of the university training. He explained that in many community development projects one came across very complex family situations. Helping these families needed an understanding of family dynamics and the role of the environment in contributing to the problems.

Use of theory to guide practice

Social workers were very clear about the knowledge and skills that they brought

to their work in informal settlements. These included:

Knowledge about resources

- Legal assistance, for example, how to access legal aid and free legal advice
- Schools for the disabled, and criteria and procedures for admission
- Homes for the elderly, and criteria and procedures for admission
- Medical facilities other than clinics and major hospitals, for example, psychiatric facilities and specialised facilities for tuberculosis patients
- Protected workshops for people with disabilities
- Organisations that provide material assistance
- Training programmes for skills development

Knowledge about procedures

- How to apply for identity documents
- How to apply for government grants
- How to apply for remission of school fees for children
- How to access funding for projects
- How to open banking accounts
- How to apply to foster a child
- How to register a creche

Skills in dealing with

- Other organisations, especially networking and referral skills
- Conflict on a micro level within small groups and families, that is counselling, conflict resolution and negotiation skills
- Families with problems, that is counselling skills
- Improving people's knowledge about social problems through the medium of community education
- Developing resources such as crèches and clubs

However, they were not so clear about what theories guided their practice. Some laughed in response to questions about this and seemed to find it difficult to answer while others needed to think for a few minutes before committing themselves to a reply.

The types of replies to questions about theory guiding practice included:

“Just stuff from that training for transformation book but nothing else” (Jenny).

“Never mind what Henderson said or any development manual said, I had this vision for the community...” (Sheryl).

“Some of the group work stuff, like pre group planning, you need to see people first and explain things to them. Also community development stuff. You can’t just go into a community. You need to contact leaders, committees. You have to introduce yourself so that they know you” (Fikile).

That these social workers seemed to spend so little time reflecting on their work was problematic. The use of the word “stuff” in two of the quotes seems to indicate a dismissive attitude to theory and while the third quote seems to illustrate that the social worker concerned remembered content about the process of intervention, but was unable to place it within any broader context.

This inability to think broadly about issues confronting them, can be seen in the following illustration. A discussion about the increase in child abuse cases went like this:

Researcher: Why do you think there is this increase?

Social Worker: It’s because of this myth that having sex with a young child cures AIDS

Researcher: Is that true?

Social Worker: Yes, it’s true. People do believe that.

Interviewer: Are there any other reasons, maybe?

Social Worker: I don't really know.

This exchange illustrates the linear thinking of this social worker. She can only identify one reason for the increase in child abuse cases that she is required to work with. Other possibilities were not considered. For example, the break down of family structures, as discussed in Chapter Six, the effects of structural poverty and violence, and the changing roles of men in society that leave men with feelings of powerlessness might all contribute to increased incidents of child abuse.

Despite what one social worker had said about Egan not being useful, other social workers mentioned that Egan's problem management model or similar models were useful, not only for working with individuals but also with groups and communities. Understanding the problem/s, setting goals and working towards the desired outcomes were steps in the helping process that most social workers seemed to follow.

One social worker, Velaphi, was very clear about the theoretical model guiding his work. Using a systems approach, he was aware that problems occurred at different levels and was therefore aware of the need to intervene at different levels. The organisation therefore adopted a holistic approach to dealing with problems. Individuals were helped to deal with their peculiar problems, to work through the trauma they had experienced and to develop greater confidence and self-esteem. In this respect, using knowledge about post traumatic syndrome and some of the techniques associated with treating this was useful. Whilst much of the theory around post traumatic stress syndrome is western in origin, Velaphi felt that it was nevertheless useful in the African context. He explained that one needed to be flexible. One of the problems was in the use of empathy because African languages generally do not have the range of words to describe emotions. Stories, metaphors and non-verbal communication were important ways in which one could show empathy. The organisation also ran groups in the

community such as womens' groups, children groups and youth groups and had recently started a group with men. These groups all had the aim of reducing stress and helping people to cope with their experiences of violence and conflict. At a community development level, the focus was on skills training, income generating projects, and literacy training.

Christine felt that the whole question of using knowledge in social work was neglected by social workers. She felt that generally social workers lacked the discipline to think through what they were doing and *"they scamper around doing band aid stuff."* As regards her own approach to social work, she commented that the more experience she had, the less clear she was about why she did things the way she did. She said: *"If you asked me three years ago, I would have told you exactly why I was doing what and I would have been able to justify it in a hundred ways. Now I'm not so sure! I think it is a process – you try and do the best in the situation you find yourself".*

This social worker has clearly moved to a position of being able to accept the uncertainties of practice and able to deal with the "messiness" of social work practice.

Opportunities for on going development

Most social workers reported that they had fairly regular in-service training sessions where they discussed new developments such as the White Paper for Welfare (1997) and the new financing policies. It seemed that for the most part, in-service training focussed on policy issues and not on intervention methods and techniques. There appeared to little attention given to reflecting on models for social work practice or to articulating practice.

Learning is a life long endeavour and if social workers are not doing this, it is cause for concern. In a rapidly changing world, social workers need to keep abreast of developments, in the field of social work and welfare generally but

also in related fields. Some of the social workers in this study pointed out that their supervisors had not changed with the times and were still clinging to outdated methods of working. The danger exists that in years to come younger social workers could make the same complaint about social workers who participated in this study. The need for on-going professional development has been recognised by the South African Council for Social Service Professions and it is anticipated that continued registration as a social worker with this Council will require evidence of continuing professional education.

There seemed to be little incentive for social workers to engage in further study and this was probably related to the low salaries social workers receive. The rewards for further study did not seem to merit the expense involved. Some social workers, however, had done short courses at ATIC (Aids Training and Information Centre) and at Childline to improve their skills in these specialised areas.

Ben epitomised a very positive attitude towards continuous education for which he took responsibility. In the course of his work, he had learned how to draw plans for playgrounds, how to grow vegetables in a plot the size of a door, how to grow vegetables in plastic bags, how hydroponics worked, and how to build pit latrines. These were very practical skills that he described as *"the fun part of what I do"*.

POSITIVE EXPERIENCES OF WORKING IN INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS

While social workers experienced many challenges in their work in informal settlements, they were also able to identify aspects of their work that they really enjoyed. They were unanimous (even those who were most overwhelmed by the difficulties facing them) that they enjoyed relating to most of the people they worked with. In particular, they liked their warmth and sincerity and felt that, in

most cases, community members and the clients with whom they worked appreciated them. This gave them a sense of job satisfaction and encouraged them to continue despite the difficulties.

At a professional level, many of the social workers felt that they had developed skills and expertise relevant to practice in informal settlements. Nombuso described a programme she had set up to help her contact clients. She recruited volunteers from the various areas in which she worked. These volunteers acted as the social workers “eyes and ears” in the community. They met regularly with her and informed her of any problems that she should know about. They also acted as “messengers” – when the social worker needed documents or needed to see clients because a statutory report was due, the volunteer would pass on the message and make sure that the relevant forms, for example, school reports and clinic reports were filled in. Having someone help with these sorts of tasks freed the social worker to concentrate on urgent business and therapeutic interviews.

Another social worker, Ngobile, had started a programme in schools that trained young people as peer counsellors able to help other young people. She was delighted that these peer counsellors took their position seriously and referred cases of abuse to her and consulted her regarding how to deal with certain problems. This was an example of successful capacity building and empowerment within a community. The peer counsellors had developed useful interpersonal skills and they provided a helpful service to other young people.

Some social workers, especially those who were mainly involved in community work, commented that they really enjoyed the experiential nature of their work. They said that they saw the benefits of working with, rather than for people and they gained a sense of satisfaction seeing people beginning to take decisions for themselves and taking charge of their own lives. Many social workers shared success stories:

"I was at the bus stop and this woman who had been my client came by with her friend. She told her friend 'See this woman – she helped me so much!' I felt so good that she acknowledged me in this way. She told me she is now running a little hair salon from her shack and she is coping nicely. I was so pleased for the rest of the day" (Nqobile).

"It took me a long time but gosh, we got there in the end. They are now functioning well as a committee and I just sit there, more like an observer. In the beginning I had to coach them all the time, tell them what to do, now they decide and tell me. Its too wonderful to see" (Greta).

It was these kinds of successes that made up for all the difficulties and made working in informal settlements worthwhile.

A number of social workers also referred to how much they had learned and developed personally through their experience of working in informal settlements. Some commented that they had developed *"new ways of seeing things"*. Andrea described how she was been able to gain a better perspective on her own life since working in an informal settlement. It seemed immoral for her, for example, to complain about a disruption to the water service in her street that lasted two hours when she knew that hundreds of people in the informal settlement had to walk long distances to fetch water. She felt that working in an informal settlement had sensitised her to many issues that she had previously not even thought about and she felt she had grown as a person because of her experiences. Other areas of personal growth included learning about different customs and cultures and developing a deeper understanding of other peoples' life styles. For some White social workers, working in informal settlements had contributed to their growing understanding of what apartheid had done to people and the desperate need for reconstruction and reconciliation in the country.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has highlighted a number of challenges facing social workers in informal settlements. The first group of challenges related to conditions within informal settlements. The second group of challenges related to difficult working conditions within the welfare organisations and the third set of challenges related to the lack of knowledge and theory relating to conditions in informal settlements.

While it was clear that social workers face many challenges in their work, it was also apparent that many of them found a way to cope and to find their work fulfilling.

The next chapter brings this thesis to a close. In it, the main findings of the study are summarised and suggestions for the way forward are made.

CHAPTER NINE

TOWARDS A SHARED UNDERSTANDING OF SOCIAL WORK IN INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS: THE WAY FORWARD

This qualitative study into social work in informal settlements was motivated by several factors. Not least of these was my own experience of the challenges of working in an informal settlement, namely Bhambayi. My discussions with other social workers who were working in informal settlements revealed that my difficulties were not unique and many of us were struggling with how best to intervene in such difficult circumstances. The changing political context and the paradigm shift from a residual welfare system to a social developmental welfare system also presented challenges.

The purpose of the study therefore was to develop an understanding of how social workers and residents of informal settlements perceived social work. The involvement of service consumers and members of the community in articulating their problems, and their vision of how social work could help address these was a unique feature of this study. The study invited social workers and residents of informal settlements to develop a shared understanding of social work and this was achieved through a process of dialogue during a workshop. It was during this workshop that social workers and residents of informal settlements together made suggestions about how social workers should work in informal settlements.

A social constructionist approach formed the theoretical framework for the study. The underlying assumption of this theoretical framework is that reality is socially constructed. In other words, our perceptions, thoughts and beliefs influence how we come to understand our world. This view also emphasizes that in order to understand human behaviour we need to take into account the

multiple voices of social workers and residents of informal settlements to be heard.

The methodology adopted was therefore constructionist in nature. Purposive sampling was used to select key informants who could speak with authority on the subject and who could present a range of opinions and perceptions. The development of “foreshadowed” questions (Rodwell, 1998:55) guided the beginning stages of the data collection. Data were collected using interviews and focus groups, methods that allowed for the in-depth exploration of ideas. Dialogue was fostered through a workshop during which participants worked in small groups and together identified problems that social workers should address, as well as how they should be addressed.

Throughout the research process, the emphasis was on uncovering and understanding the multiple realities of social work as experienced by social workers and residents of informal settlements and as such, the subjective and unique experiences of the research participants was valued. However, the study also sought to uncover areas of shared understandings of social work.

This final chapter provides a summary of the main findings of the study and presents my interpretation of what this “shared understanding” of what social work in informal settlements is. The study results clearly demonstrated that social work in informal settlements is difficult. Some of these difficulties are unique to informal settlements, while others are more general and relate to the macro context in which social work in South Africa operates. These factors are summarized and attention is drawn to the complex ways in which the history of South Africa intersects with contemporary political, social and economic factors to impact on social work in informal settlements.

In planning this study, I discussed the possibilities of the research study with a number of social workers and they reminded me that social work research needed to impact on practice and that the value of this study would be in helping them to become better practitioners in the field. While understanding

and theorizing is an intrinsically worthwhile endeavour, in social work this understanding needs to be translated into practice that can improve the lives of the people we work with. The workshop was the beginning of that process and this chapter continues the process by exploring ways in which social work in informal settlements can move forward.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS RELATED TO INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS

A comprehensive illustration of the problems facing people who live in informal settlements and their opinion of how social work could address these issues was covered in several chapters. A literature review of informal settlements (Chapter Four) introduced the complex ways in which informal settlements came into being and examined the varied responses to such settlements. An in-depth case study of one informal settlement, Bhambayi, (Chapter Five) moved the discussion from the general to the specific and provided insights into how one informal settlement came into being, and how its unique history has impacted on its problems and its responses to social services. The results of three focus groups held with community leaders in Bhambayi (Chapter Six) provided further clarity on how residents of this informal settlement viewed their problems and the role of social workers in addressing these problems.

Informal settlements in South Africa came into being because of a complex combination of political, economic and social factors. A myriad of apartheid laws impacted on nearly every aspect of peoples' lives and denied the majority of the South African population access to land and housing. Informal settlements arose out of peoples' needs for somewhere to live.

Residents of informal settlements and social workers identified a wide range of social and personal problems within informal settlements. Unemployment and its resultant poverty was the major problem facing all the informal settlements and was clearly the issue that required urgent intervention.

Poverty affected many other aspects of life in informal settlements. In examining how poverty impacts on the lives of people, the tension between what Mills (1959) termed "private troubles and public issues" becomes evident. High rates of unemployment within South Africa as a whole and the shedding of jobs through the process of privatization are "public issues" that limit people's opportunities to enter the job market. This problem is exacerbated by the country's particular apartheid history. The majority of people were denied adequate education, and "job reservation" limited people's access to work experience. Many informal settlements experienced a great deal of political violence in years prior to the first democratic elections in 1994. While the political violence has abated, the legacy of violence lives on and violence as a way of resolving problems, for example, in the taxi industry, continues to plague informal settlements. At a micro level, these public issues translate into "personal troubles" as people experience the anguish of trying to feed, house and clothe themselves and their families, and of trying to educate their children so that they can have a better life. The stress of living in these conditions finds expression in mental and physical health problems, in poor interpersonal and family relationships and, in violent and sometimes criminal behaviour.

In addressing these problems, social workers faced a number of challenges. The actual conditions within informal settlements presented many difficulties. Poor, or, in some cases, non-existent infra-structural resources and the difficult terrain in many informal settlements hampered access to people. A lack of facilities, such as appropriate venues for meetings and electricity also impacted on social work activities. Of concern to many social workers were the dangers associated with work in such areas and a number of social workers had experienced traumatic incidents in the course of their work in informal settlements.

Working with people in informal settlements was also challenging. Community members had unrealistic expectations of what social workers could achieve and this impacted participation, or lack thereof in community

projects. Conflict between community leaders also impacted on social work services and hampered service delivery. Cultural differences presented further challenges to social workers as they struggled to make sense of traditional practices that did not cohere with human rights.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS RELATED TO SOCIAL WORK

A literature review (Chapter Three) provided an overview of the historical development of social work, both in the western world and in South Africa. This provided the background for understanding the macro context in which social workers in informal settlements find themselves. In-depth interviews with 22 social workers illustrated the varied nature of social work in informal settlements (Chapter Seven) and the challenges facing them (Chapter Eight).

The historical uncertainty about the mission of social work continues to plague social work practice and social workers in informal settlements were trying to be all things to all people. Generalist social workers, who in most cases, worked in more than one informal settlement were trying to provide preventive services in the form of educational programmes and the development of resources, as well as remedial services in the form of statutory intervention and counselling. Social workers dealt with a wide range of problems. Poverty, child abuse and increasingly, HIV/AIDS were identified as major problems.

The policy framework within which social work operates exacerbates this problem. The White Paper for Welfare (1997) advocates a social developmental approach to welfare and emphasizes participatory and community based programmes. Social workers in this study subscribed to these principles and a number of those who were involved in primarily community development developed programmes that cohere well with a developmental model. Even those who were primarily caseworkers saw the need for community-based interventions that addressed macro issues, but

with their large caseloads felt unable to do justice to this aspect of their work. Compounding the problem was the lack of funding for social work and the poor working conditions under which many social workers worked.

Of concern was that a number of social workers in this study have adopted a disempowered position. For example, they accepted appalling working conditions such as no toilets. They also agreed to work with unacceptably high caseloads which they acknowledged compromised standards of care and this study has provided examples of unprofessional and, in some cases, ethically suspect practice. Social workers talked about being "shouted at" by their supervisors and they described organizational structures that were unsupportive in the extreme. Like the majority of people in South Africa, social workers have been socialized into bureaucratic and patriarchal structures and the experience of apartheid stifled participation and decision making on issues that impact on our daily lives and the lives of people we work with (Sewpaul, 1992). Social workers therefore, at times, feel the same hopelessness and despair as their clients and need through a process of reflection to understand their own sense of where they have come from and where they are going.

In contrast to the challenges and difficulties of working in informal settlements, the study has also provided evidence of good practice and has given examples of some innovative projects. It has paid tribute to the positive attitudes and vision of many social workers. That social workers continue to work under difficult conditions is a testimony to their courage and commitment, and it is these qualities that will see social work survive and make its rightful contribution to helping people improve the quality of their lives.

THE WAY FORWARD: SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

If the narratives of social workers and residents of informal settlements, as summarised above, accurately capture the multiple realities of social work in informal settlements, several suggestions and recommendations can be made to assist social workers in similar situations. In reporting the results throughout this thesis, I have attempted to provide detailed information about the context so that conclusions can be reached about whether transfer to another context is possible. If it is possible, these suggestions and recommendations have the potential to provide social workers with a range of options for enriching and improving their social work practice in informal settlements.

A theoretical framework for social work in informal settlements

The use of social constructionism as the theoretical framework for this research study has illustrated its usefulness in drawing attention to the multiplicity of ways in which people understand their world. The narratives of social workers and residents of informal settlements revealed that there was no one explanation for the problems people in informal settlements experience, and there was no one way of interpreting what social work in informal settlements is. In short, there is no single reality “out there” waiting to be discovered.

Social constructionism provided a framework for understanding how history, and where we have come from, affects how we experience our present. Social work with its own particular history of development has evolved into a profession that addresses a multitude of problems ranging from the intra-personal to the structural as is evident in the international definition of social work (IFSW). It also uses a wide variety of methods on addressing these problems. History has also influenced how residents of informal settlements experience their lives. The oppressive laws of the past, and the experience of upheaval, violence and trauma all contribute to the problems they experience. Social constructionism also contributed to understanding how political, social,

economic and cultural forces all impact on how people make sense of their experiences. If we are to effectively intervene in the lives of people who live in informal settlements it is important to recognise these multiple realities and to find a way of accommodating them within a practice framework. Social constructionism provides a way of doing this.

Social constructionism provides a useful mechanism for assessing and understanding a situation. Understanding would take into account the interplay between the individual and the environment. While similar to the eco-systems perspective, social constructionism goes further by insisting that this understanding be the result of dialogue between the social worker and client– not the expert opinion of the social worker analysing the client situation.

Social constructionism does not provide a blue-print for intervention but comfortably accommodates a number of theoretical approaches which have already found support in the discipline of social work. The following two examples illustrate how social constructionist thinking can accommodate existing theories and can provide an over-arching framework for intervention.

Example One: Addressing poverty

It was clear from the study that the most pressing problem that impacted on nearly every aspect of life in informal settlements was poverty. There was also general agreement that social workers have a role to play in addressing this problem. Social work has its roots in caring for the poor and present welfare policy in South Africa mandates social workers to address poverty. Within a social constructionist approach, social workers in informal settlements would first, as van Schalkwyk (1997) suggested adopt a humble attitude as they began the process of understanding what it means for this person, or for this group of people, in this informal settlement to be poor.

Social constructionism reminds us not to accept at face value taken for granted knowledge and ideas. One of the accepted practices in social work is

an antipathy for providing material aid. Concerns around this centre on a number of issues. Fear of creating dependency is one, with the argument that if we provide people with material aid they will not take responsibility for themselves and will always depend on aid. A further problem related to how to distribute scarce resources and how to make decisions about who qualifies and who does not. Social constructionism encourages us to examine both these arguments and to see if they can be reframed or interpreted differently. Are these concerns also the concerns of our clients and what would they say if we discussed these concerns with them (not in the sense of explaining why we do not have material aid but in a genuine attempt to create a shared understanding of the issue!)? Is it possible that engaging in such a process of dialogue might result in a new way of seeing the provision of material aid?

The study results illustrated that one of the ways in which poverty manifested itself was in hunger and poor nutrition that in turn affected school performance of children as well as employment opportunities for adults. In helping a community to address this need, social workers could engage in what Freire (1972) described as the development of critical consciousness which he claimed had the power to transform reality. This requires firstly a process of naming – for example, what is the problem, what is the situation? Secondly, a process of reflection takes place – why is this the case thus enabling social workers and clients to challenge taken for granted explanations. Of particular salience is the process of liberatory dialogue where people begin to reflect on, and understand the impact of external, structural sources of oppression and inequality. Through this process, they begin to recognize their own strengths. Thirdly, a process of action begins – what can be done and what options do we have?

Based on this it might be decided that a programme of material assistance is necessary to meet immediate needs. Social workers with their knowledge of community resources (religious bodies, service organisations) might help community groups set up feeding schemes according to their needs. If local schools are not part of the school feeding scheme funded by government,

social workers could help them to access this source of funding. Garden projects and communal gardens do not appear to have been successful according to the participants in this study. However, family gardens that could contribute to food security could be encouraged. Experts in this field have shown that a garden the size of a door can provide food for a family. Even in informal settlements, where space is a problem, these gardens can be established. Working with community groups, social workers could play a supportive and facilitative role in encouraging such projects – for example by gardening support groups, assistance for seeds and implements and garden competitions. Such initiatives must be based on the mobilization of people's strengths which needs to be as Rahman (1993:21) described as "inner urge oriented", that is self reliant, non-coercive, non-alienating mobilisation that is not imposed on the people concerned but is an expression of an "organic unity of consciousness". This can only be achieved by beginning where people are, and by understanding the unique histories and circumstances of people in informal settlements.

The judicious use of social security is one of the main ways in which the South African government seeks to alleviate poverty and to ensure a basic income to the poorest and most vulnerable sections of the population, particularly the aged, the disabled and children under the age of seven. Social workers need to ensure that people who are entitled to government grants get them. This alone would increase the amount of disposal income within informal settlements and could improve the nutritional status of many families. Access to these grants has been identified as problematic and social workers have a role to play to helping clients to access what is rightfully theirs. This could involve firstly, providing accurate information to people about the grants available, the criteria for accessing these grants and the procedure for applications. It might also involve pressurising the Department of Home Affairs to issue identity documents speedily and the Department of Welfare to process applications timeously. In cases where problems arise, social workers should encourage people who are directly affected to speak for themselves and to bring these matters to the attention of members of local,

provincial and national government and the public through the press. As people learn to externalise and to recognise the links between structural inequalities and poverty, they might be able to transcend self-blame and internalized oppression, and to validate themselves as human beings. Such validation is central to empowerment based practice and as people recognize their own strengths and resources they may be enabled to challenge the fundamental political, socio-economic and cultural structures of society that keep people poor and disempowered. They may then be able to take on roles as lobbyists and activists.

Social workers in this study had not experienced much success with income generating projects and it might be that a different approach is needed. The stories of the social workers indicated that problems centred mainly around lack of trust and unrealistic expectations. In these circumstances the importance of dialogue becomes evident. If people can begin to name their concerns and reflect on why they exist, they can begin to develop ways of addressing these. Social constructionism reminds us that each person's experience of reality is unique and influenced by a myriad of factors. When people begin to share these experiences and perceptions, there is the possibility for shared understandings to arise and for trust to develop. From this process, people might decide that an income-generating group might be a solution and a group, developing through such reflection and action, has more likelihood of being successful. Again, social workers with their knowledge of resources could utilize their networker and broker roles to access help from specialised organisations that focus on developing skills for small business enterprises.

Social workers should also consider less direct ways of contributing to poverty alleviation. Midgley (1996) pointed out that development economists have demonstrated that investment in human capital formation such as education, nutrition and health care produce tangible economic benefits. In the area of pre-school education, for example, much could be done to protect children whose parents are away working, contribute to improving the nutritional status

and health of children and to providing a sound preparation for formal schooling. Preschool facilities could serve as multipurpose buildings - an example of this was provided in this study. However, preschool programmes need not be centralized in a building but creative home programmes could be established. Similarly, after-school programmes that provide care and protection for children could be established. Social workers, through community engagement and participation, are ideally situated to implement such programmes as was illustrated by the case study of Reshma in this thesis.

Increasing literacy levels could increase people's ability to access the job market or to set up their own small businesses. Social workers in informal settlements can play a role in this regard by either establishing such programmes themselves or by encouraging non-governmental organisations that specialise in this field to extend their services to informal settlements.

Example Two: Caring for the vulnerable

The most vulnerable section of the population in informal settlements according to the data gathered in this study were children and the high rates of child abuse. Child sexual abuse was of special concern to social workers and residents of informal settlements alike.

The use of a social constructionist approach helps us to understand child abuse in several ways. In the first place, the concept "childhood" is socially constructed and notions of childhood have changed throughout history. The prevailing view is that childhood is a developmental phase that places the child in a dependent position vis-à-vis their parents and society. Parents have a fundamental right and a legal duty to care for their children but additionally, through legislation such as the Child Care Act, No 74 of 1983, the state has assumed responsibility to intervene in a family if there is actual harm, or risk of harm to a child. Social workers working in this field need to constantly negotiate the meaning of childhood with parents, families and children themselves. Social constructionism, and its attention to how culture

influences our construction of reality, reminds us to be sensitive to issues of culture when working with child abuse matters. An honest reflection on cultural traditions by social workers and clients together should help us to acknowledge when cultural traditions are useful. Equally important is the duty to confront when culture is used as an excuse for abusive behaviour towards the most vulnerable members of our society. Cultural values, beliefs and practices that are harmful should never take precedence over the protection of basic human rights. Contrary to popular belief, culture is not something that is fixed. As culture is socially constructed, it is dynamic and subject to deconstruction and change.

Not only are the concepts, childhood and culture, socially constructed, so is the concept of child abuse. The study provided an illustration in Chapter Five of how young boys in Bhambyai who had sexually abused a little girl had come to construct their notions of themselves as boys in relation to girls. At a very young age, they already saw girls as objects for boy's pleasure and because they saw her as an object, they did not respond to her crying and pain. By their response, the boy's mothers and the community, in effect, condoned the behaviour. The mothers were aggressive towards the girl's mother and the community sanction of the boys was minimal. Families and communities are thus socialising boys in what could be considered inappropriate ways. This accords with the patriarchal sexual script within which girls and women are socially and culturally constructed and portrayed as existing for the sexual gratification of men and boys. Such notions of gender are in urgent need of deconstruction and need to be dealt with at various practice and policy levels.

Some social workers in this study, such as Buyi, as well as some community leaders in Bhambyai, adopted a "blame the mother" approach and constructed child abuse as a problem caused by the mother's personal deficiencies. In informal settlements, however, children who have been abused have been living in conditions of poverty. In such harsh conditions, it may be that mothers have come to see their female children as the means for

survival. This explanation would help to understand why mothers “sell” their children or why they turn a blind eye when their means of financial support abuse their children. Social workers need to address these issues and to help mothers provide the support and care their children need. This would include helping them to access the child support grant if they qualified for it, or helping them to develop the skills needed for productive self-employment. It would include building support systems that would help mothers protect their children. Community leaders in Bhambayi, for example, pointed out how difficult it is for parents to bring up children in informal settlements and social workers need to support and encourage parents in this task. Parenting support programmes which offer parents the opportunity to share their concerns with other parents and to learn new skills would be helpful. Establishing and supporting local support systems such as neighbours, extended family systems, self help groups and religious organisations are ways in which communities can be strengthened to prevent child abuse.

In preventing child abuse, social constructionism offers a way of interrogating why it happens and what we should be doing to prevent it. In seeking to prevent abuse, an analysis of the causes as discussed above, might divert efforts from awareness programmes that encourage teachers to detect abuse and children to report abuse to preventive and educative programmes that address gender inequalities. Using the Freirian method of naming, reflecting and action, adults (both men and women) could be encouraged to explore gender issues and to examine how their attitudes impact on their communities. Life skills programmes for children (both boys and girls) could encourage children to develop respect and consideration for each other as equals.

Social workers in this study experienced difficulty in dealing with large caseloads and the high numbers of child abuse cases, and it was clear that the individual, case by case approach was not effective. Social workers should work with communities to develop innovative ways of dealing with this problem. Some examples of this already exist. In Cape Town, a project called “Isolabantwana” (“Eye of the Child”) (Doran, 1999; Sewpaul, 2001a)

trained community volunteers who act as resources for children who are being abused and who can offer a safe place for the children. Working with the justice system, some of these volunteers have statutory power to remove children from abusive situations for a period of time. Children remain in their communities and efforts are made to deal with problems at that level. Social workers provide a range of supportive services. This is one project that works in one area but it holds potential for replication in other areas. Engaging in a process of true dialogue with communities may lead to solutions that we have not yet even thought possible.

In dealing with children who have been abused, social workers need to listen to the stories of these children in an attempt to understand how they experienced the abuse. The example given in this study of a social worker using play therapy techniques with limited resources shows how social workers can create space for children to express themselves. Narrative therapy provides possibilities for social workers to help children and their families to create new stories for themselves, stories that de-emphasise pathology and victimhood and focus on strengths and ability to cope. Above all, social workers need to be nurturing and supportive of these children. Merely moving them from one place to another, as some social workers in this study seemed to do, is not empowering for the children as is clearly elucidated in the discussion document of the IMC (1997).

Working from an understanding of the total context of the child's situation, social workers would be sensitive to how poverty and a lack of resources might impact on a family's ability to comply with management plans. For example, if a child was placed in alternate care and visiting arrangements were made, social workers would need to ensure that clients have the resources to do this.

Creating an enabling environment for social workers

The study results indicated that social workers work in what can be termed a hostile environment. At a macro level, social workers in South Africa at

present find themselves in a marginalised position with little official support for its activities. At an organisational level, social workers find themselves working under difficult conditions and again, little support. If social workers are to engage in empowering practices as described above, attention needs to be given to creating a more enabling and supportive environment in which social workers can work.

THE MACRO ENVIRONMENT

The social developmental welfare paradigm as elucidated in the White Paper for Welfare (1997) provides the policy framework within which social workers must operate and social workers should have no problem in accepting the underlying principles of this approach. The emphasis on capacity building and the importance of relevant and accessible services cohere well with social work values. This study illustrated that social workers in informal settlements are working within this paradigm. Social workers in this study had a regular presence in informal settlements in an effort to make services accessible. A number of projects were community based and community members were fully involved in planning and implementing these and the successful building of a creche in one informal settlement provided an example of this type of practice. Other examples were the training of volunteers to act as the social worker's messenger in cases where the social worker could not get to clients, and the training of school learners as peer counselors to support and help other children.

Despite these examples of good practice, this study also presented some examples of poor practice that lend credence to the perception that social workers are not relevant in a developmental context. Some social workers in this study accused their supervisors of not "transforming" and of being unable to make the paradigm shift to a developmental model of social work.

A multi pronged approach is needed to address this problem. In the first place, social workers need to challenge the view that social work is not transforming or relevant to to-day's society. A humble attitude in dealing with

clients has been advocated, but such an attitude in the face of criticisms from society at large is not helpful. Social workers need to actively contribute to society's construction of social work and not allow society or Government to take on this function on its own. In a recent (13 June 2001) submission to the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Social Development, the Joint Universities Committee on Social Work Education expressed the concern of some academics that social work was being defined in accordance with Government prescriptions and ideology. Social workers should publicise their successes and make their voices heard in issues that affect the public. Social workers need to demonstrate that the clinical and developmental aspects of work are not antithetical to each other, and that these should not be seen as dichotomous entities. Social workers need to illustrate how a comprehensive approach to social work services can incorporate therapy, social change and development.

Additionally, social workers need to call attention to the obstacles to working within a developmental framework. The lack of funding, the low salaries of social workers and their poor working conditions are factors that need to be addressed.

THE ORGANISATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

Competent, well-motivated personnel are a welfare organisation's most valuable resource (Wegenast and Bookhagen, 1996). Welfare organisations therefore need to provide the structure that supports empowering practice.

Social workers in this study described very strict hierarchical organisational structures that controlled working hours and emphasized attention to administrative work. Social constructionism challenges us to question whether these types of structures are the most effective way of ordering organizations. In order to work in informal settlements social workers need to be flexible to meet with people when they are available and strict eight hour working days with structured tea and lunch breaks is not conducive to this. Carefully

structured flexi-time arrangements could help to ease tensions in this regard and could also help to overcome some of the shortage of office space.

Hierarchical structures also mean that social workers who have the most direct experience of working in informal settlements are not included in decision making about their work. Some social workers in this study described, for example, how they had no control over how funds are allocated. This obviously had direct implications for the types of projects that could be established in informal settlements. A flattened structure and co-operative management policies would allow social workers to have a direct input into decisions about their work conditions.

Another of the “taken for granted” ideas that needs to be challenged concerns that of the importance of supervision in social work practice. Social constructionist ideas can help us to understand why supervision has come to be such an important aspect of social work practice. Carefully analyzing supervision practice might illustrate that the notion of supervision as a supportive function for social workers exists primarily in literature and discourses about its supportive functions serve to mask its real function of control. The study results indicated that supervision was a source of stress rather than support.

Social workers in South Africa have a four-year university qualification. Other professionals, such as speech therapists, occupational therapists and engineers also have four-year qualifications and are considered able to work independently without supervision – why then do social workers need supervision? On site training, induction for new social workers, staff development programmes, case conferences, peer consultation and support for the stressful nature of the work can be provided without formal top-down supervision.

Instead of supervisors, welfare organisations might give attention to establishing well- resourced human resources departments that function to

support front line social workers. In consultation with social workers, such a department could facilitate the establishment of staff development programmes. This could provide orientation for new social workers and in service training. Social workers in this study indicated that in service training programmes focused mainly on policy issues. However, study results pointed to the need for social workers to reflect on their practice and to locate their practice within a broader understanding of race, culture, gender, and structural causes of poverty. Staff development programmes could provide the opportunity for social workers to reflect and dialogue on these issues. Staff development programmes could also facilitate staff attendance at short courses and provide incentives for the completion of further study and higher degrees. In this way, social workers would be encouraged and rewarded for seeking to improve their practice.

Staff development programmes would also pay attention to the social workers needs for support in stressful situations. Ensuring that safety measures are, as far as is possible, in place would do much to reduce the stress associated with working in dangerous situations. Access to reliable cars and cell phones, for example are essential as is some knowledge of defensive driving and basic self-defence techniques. Where social workers have suffered a traumatic experience as a number of social workers in this study had, they should be given compassionate leave and counselling should be offered.

Missing in welfare organizations is the voice of service consumers. Residents of informal settlements who participated in this study had some very clear ideas about the type of social workers they wanted, and the types of services they required. A participatory management system in which social workers, clients and communities plan local welfare services offers opportunities for this to take place.

The question of the dependence of welfare organisations on the state for funding also needs to be re-examined. Statutory work is concerned with implementing the provision of legislation and is the responsibility of the state.

In return for funding, private welfare organizations assist the state in this role. Social constructionism suggests that this might be another piece of “taken for granted” knowledge that needs re-examination. In the absence of adequate funding, should welfare organisations refuse to accept more cases than they can deal with? High caseloads, as illustrated in this study, were sometimes responsible for ethically suspect behaviour on the part of social workers. Should private welfare organisations not then insist that the state take responsibility for dealing with these cases? In addressing such questions, one of the more fundamental issues to be confronted is the skewed power relations between the state and private welfare organizations with power being tipped in favour of the state.

Preparing social workers for empowering practice: Developing a reflective practitioner

The study results revealed mixed feelings about the role of social work education in preparing social workers for practice. Some social workers felt that their university training had been a waste of time while others were positive about their experiences. Analysing their responses illustrated that those who were negative seemed to be expecting that social work education would provide them with “answers” and a “recipe” for intervening in informal settlements. A social constructionist approach to social work education would help such students to develop an appreciation of the existence of multiple realities.

The aim of education within a social constructionist approach is not just to transmit knowledge but to negotiate the meaning of multiple perspectives. I have explained elsewhere (Simpson, 2000) that students and teachers bring their own personal life stories and views of reality to the learning situation. In addition, there exists a body of knowledge, which although socially constructed has taken on an objective reality. Learning thus becomes a conversation or dialogue between the student, the educator and knowledge.

Teaching methods within a social constructionist approach require the active participation of educators and students. A number of methods can be used to encourage students to develop an awareness of how reality is constructed in different ways by different people, and how the complex social world in which we live influences this view of reality. Small group discussions provide a forum for students to discuss a wide range of opinions. Case studies and analyses of practice help students to examine real life situations, and provide opportunities to examine the relevance of different theories and models of assessment and practice. Debates can help students reflect on different points of view by having them defend a position with which they do not agree. The use of stories, poetry and art can help students to understand that there are many ways of knowing and experiencing the world.

A social constructionist approach to education would also influence the content of teaching. Within this construction of social work, social work is not objective, neutral and value free and thus focusing on values and ethics becomes central to any course on social work. In addition, the models of practice that are taught would be chosen to cohere with social constructionist principles. Students need to learn that one of their main tasks as social workers is to understand the reality of their clients, rather than to see themselves as experts who can adopt a neutral stance in relation to their clients. The importance of working collaboratively is stressed and models that incorporate the strengths and empowerment perspectives, and feminist and radical theoretical critiques, provide opportunities for this.

An important aspect of social work education is the attention paid to fieldwork or practice experience. Working with real people in real life situations should help students to realize that there are many interpretations of reality, and that there are no quick fix solutions. It is also in the arena of practice that social work students should begin to reflect on the complexities of responding to individual problems while at the same time attending to structural problems that impact on individuals. Students therefore need, as Dominelli (1996:200)

has pointed out, “challenging, but supportive placements that enable them to develop their skills as critical, reflexive practitioners”.

Such an approach to social work education rejects the technical – rational or positivist approach to knowledge building that has dominated knowledge building for so long (Papell and Skolnik, 1992) and focuses on developing what Schon (1983) called “a reflective practitioner”. When faced with a unique or puzzling situation, the reflective practitioner engages in a reflective process that draws on intuition, past experiences, as well as theory to hypothesise about the situation and to develop modes of intervention.

Evaluating practice and building knowledge

Evaluating practice and being accountable for one’s services, is an important part of ethical practice. Statistics about numbers of people served and number of projects established say nothing about the quality of services and whether these services have had the desired effects. Social constructionism suggests that qualitative evaluation studies would be more useful in understanding how consumers perceive services. Clients and community groups can be asked to give direct feedback regarding the services they received. In the same way as social workers and clients dialogue about problem definition and what to do, so too can they dialogue about whether what we are doing is helpful. Focus groups, which were found to be useful means of data gathering in this study, could be used to gather information about the effectiveness and usefulness of social work services.

This study has pointed to areas where further research might be fruitful. Social workers and residents of informal settlements in this study said that they were beginning to see the effects of HIV/AIDS in their communities. Reluctance to disclose and the misconceptions surrounding the disease appear to have contributed to the problem remaining to a large extent a hidden one. Given the extent of the problem in the country as a whole, it can be hypothesized that people with HIV/AIDS will very soon form the most

vulnerable section of the population in informal settlements. Monitoring of the situation and on-going research into how to address these issues is essential.

Social constructionism as a research approach provided a useful framework for understanding the complexity and multiplicity of realities of social work as experienced by social workers and clients. Greater use of this approach within social work research will help us to develop a greater understanding of the myriad of issues that we confront in our practice.

CONCLUSION

This concluding chapter summarized the main findings of this study and made suggestions for the way forward. Together, the narratives of the social workers and residents of informal settlements drew attention to the complex way in which historical, social, economic, cultural and political forces have shaped social work practice in informal settlements and they have illustrated that social work is a "collage of ways of knowing and of varied practices" (Martinez-Bawley and Zorita, 1998: 208).

This study has provided an account of the "state of the art" of social work in informal settlements at this particular moment in history. In doing so, it provides a baseline for further studies and it makes a worthwhile contribution to our understanding of social work in informal settlements within the South African context.

REFERENCE LIST

Abramovitz, M. (1998). Social work and social reform: An arena of struggle. **Social Work**, 43(6), 512-526.

Adler, J. (1994). Life in an informal settlement. **Urban Forum**, 5(2), 99-111.

African National Congress. (1994). **The reconstruction and development programme: A policy framework**. Johannesburg: Umanyano Publications.

Ainslee, R. and de Haas, M. (1998). Bhambayi: The "third force" in action. In C. Schutte, I. Liebenberg and A. Minnaar. (Eds.). **The hidden hand – covert operations in South Africa**. Pretoria: Human Sciences Research Council.

Allen, J.A. (1993). The constructivist paradigm: Values and ethics. **Journal of Teaching in Social Work**, 8(1/2), 31-54.

Annecke, W.J. (1992). **We are so poor: An investigation into the lives of 10 women living in an informal area in the Durban Functional Region with particular reference to the role of domestic fuels**. Unpublished Master's dissertation. Durban: University of Natal.

Ardington, L. (1992). In the land of Canaan. **Indicator, SA**, 9(3), 47-49.

Ardington, E. and Lund, F. (1995). **Pensions and development: How the social security system can complement programmes of reconstruction and development**. Development Bank, South Africa.

Asamoah, Y.W. and Beverley, C.C. (1988). Collaboration between Western and African Schools of Social Work. **International Social Work**, 31(3), 177-193.

Atherton, C.R. (1993). Empiricists versus social constructionists: Time for a

cease-fire. **Families in Society: The Journal of Contemporary Human Services**, 74(10), 617-624.

Austin, D. (1983). The Flexner myth and the history of social work. **Social Service Review**, 57(3), 357-377.

Baer, B.L. and Federico, R. (1978). **Educating the baccalaureate social worker**. Cambridge, Mass: Ballinger.

Balloch, S., Pahl, J. and McLean, J. (1998). Working in the social services: Job satisfaction, stress and violence. **British Journal of Social Work**, 28, 329-350.

Bar-On, A.A. (1994). The elusive boundaries of social work. **Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare**, 21(3), 53-67.

Bekker, L. and Louw, A. (1994). Conflict and migration in KwaZulu- Natal. In D. Hindson and J. McCarthy. (Eds.). **Here to stay: Informal settlements in KwaZulu- Natal**. Durban: Indicator Press.

Bennett, T. (1993). **An exploratory study on community work in informal settlements with specific reference to gaining entry into these communities**. Unpublished research paper, University of Natal, Durban.

Berg, I.K. and De Jong, P. (1996). Solution building conversations: Co-constructing a sense of competence with clients. **Families in Society: The Journal of Contemporary Human Services**, 77(6), 376-391.

Berger, P. and Luckmann, T. (1966). **The social construction of reality**. Garden City, NY: Doubleday.

Berger, R.L., McBreen, J.T. and Rifkin, M.J. (1996). **Human behaviour: A**

perspective for the helping professions. White Plains, NY: Longmans Publishers.

Berlin, S.B. (1996). Constructivism and the environment: A cognitive-integrative perspective for social work practice. **Families In Society: The Journal of Contemporary Human Services**, 77(6), 326-335.

Boaden, B. and Taylor, R. (1992). Informal settlement: theory versus practice in KwaZulu/Natal. In D.M. Smith (Ed.) **The apartheid city and beyond.** Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press.

Brewer, C. and Lait, J. (1980). **Can social work survive?** London: Maurice Temple Smith Ltd.

Brieland, D. (1990). The Hull-House tradition and the contemporary social worker: Was Jane Addams really a social worker? **Social Work**, 35(2), 134-138.

Brower, A. M. (1988). Can the ecological model guide social work practice? **Social Service Review**, 62(3), 411-429.

Burkey, S. (1993). **People First: A guide to participatory rural development.** London: Zed books.

Burr, V. (1995). **An introduction to social constructionism.** London: Routledge.

Capra, F. (1982). **The turning point.** London: Fontana Paperbacks.

Caspj, Y. (1992). A continuum theory for social work knowledge. **Journal of Sociology and social welfare**, 19(3), 105-120.

Census (1996). <http://www.statssa.gov.za>

Chambers, R. (1983). **Rural development: Putting the last first**. Harlow, Essex: Longman Scientific and Technical.

Chikanda, E.N. (1987). **Attitudes of the black public in urban areas with regard to the care of the aged**. Pretoria: Human Sciences Research Council.

Chikanda, E.N. (1988). Social work research in South Africa: As I see it. **The Social Work Practitioner-Researcher**, 1 (1), 2-6.

Cloete, P.J. (1998). **Capacity building in informal settlements: An exploratory qualitative study**. Unpublished master's dissertation. University of Port Elizabeth.

Coetzee, J.K. (1996). A micro foundation for development thinking. In J.K. Coetzee and J. Graaf. (Eds.). **Reconstruction, development and people**. Johannesburg: International Thomson Publishing (SA) (Pty) Ltd.

Collings, J.A. and Murray, P.J. (1996). Predictors of stress among social workers: An empirical study. **British Journal of Social Work**, 26, 375-387.

Compton, B.R. and Galaway, B. (1999). **Social work processes**. Pacific Grove, Ca: Brooks/Cole.

Coovadia, H.M. (1992). **The quest for health, development and democracy**. Pietermaritzburg: Natal University Press.

Corey, G. (1977). **Theory and practice of counselling and psychotherapy**. Monterey, Ca: Brooks/Cole.

Corey, M.S. and Corey, G. (1992). **Groups: Process and practice**. Pacific Grove, Ca: Brooks/Cole.

Couglan, F. (2000). Trying to read the writing on the wall: Immediate and imminent impact of national policy. **Social Work/Maatskaplike Werk**, 36(4), 351-360.

Crankshaw, O and Hart, T. (1990). The roots of homelessness: Causes of squatting in the Vlakfontein settlement south of Johannesburg. **South African Geographical Journal**, 72, 65-70.

Cresswell, J.W. (1998). **Qualitative Inquiry and research design: Choosing among five traditions**. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Cross, C., Bekker, S. and Clark, C. (1992). People on the move: Migration streams in the DFR. **Indicator Press**, 9(3), 41-44.

Cross, C., Bekker, S. and Clark, C. (1994). Migration into DFR informal settlements: An overview of trends. In D. Hindson and J. McCarthy. (Eds.). **Here to stay: Informal settlements in KwaZulu-Natal**. Durban: Indicator Press.

Cross, C., Mngadi, T. And Mbhele, T. (1998). On the move: Poverty and the impact of migration in KwaZulu- Natal. **Indicator South Africa**, 15 (1): 71-76.

Data Research Africa. (1995). **Bhambayi Survey**. Durban.

Davenport, J.A. and Davenport 111, J. (1998). Economic and social development and rural social work as a model of the generalist approach for the 21st century. In S.J. Jones and J.L. Zlotnik. (Eds.). **Preparing helping professionals to meet community needs**. Alexandria, VA: CSWE

- Dean, R.G. (1993). Constructivism: An approach to clinical practice. **Smith College Studies in Social Work**, 63(2), 127-146.
- Dean, R.G. and Rhodes, M.L. (1998). Social constructionism and ethics: What makes a "better" story? **Families in Society: The Journal of Contemporary Human Services**, 79, 254-262.
- Denscombe, M. (1998). **The good research guide**. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Department of Housing. (1995). **White Paper: A new housing policy and strategy for South Africa**.
[Http://www.polity.org.za/govdocs/white_papers/housing.html](http://www.polity.org.za/govdocs/white_papers/housing.html)
- Department of Social Welfare and Pensions. (1966). Circular No 29.
- Department of Social Welfare and Pensions. (1978). Circular No 68.
- Department of Welfare. (1997). **White Paper for Social Welfare. (No1108)**
[Http://www.polity.org.za/govdocs/white_papers/social971.html](http://www.polity.org.za/govdocs/white_papers/social971.html)
- DeVore, W and Schlesinger, E.G.(1996). **Ethnic-sensitive social work practice**. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- Dewar, D. (1993). **The De Loo task group report on housing policy for South Africa: Some perspectives**. Cape Town: Cape Town University Press.
- De Beer, F. and Swanepoel, H. (1998). **Community development and beyond: Issues, structures and procedures**. Pretoria: J.L. van Schaik Publishers.
- De Minnaar, A. (1992). **Squatters, violence and the future of informal**

settlements in the greater Durban region. Pretoria: Human Sciences Research Council.

Diller, J.V. (1999). **Cultural diversity: A primer for the human services.** Belmont, Ca: Brooks/Cole.

Dominelli, L. (1996). The future of social work education: beyond the state of the art. **Scandinavian Journal of Social Welfare**, 5, 194-201.

Dominelli, L. (1999). Tackling racism in everyday realities: A task for social workers. In M. Callahan and S. Hesse. (Eds.). **Valuing the field: Child Welfare in an international context.** Ashgate: Aldershot.

Doran, L. (1999). Notes from practice: "Eye of the child": "Isolabantwana – A community based child protection programme. **Social Work, Maatskaplike Werk**, 35(4), 396-399.

Duncan, N. and Rock, B. (undated). **Inquiry into the effects of violence on children: Preliminary report.** Commission of Inquiry regarding the prevention of public violence and intimidation.

Durban Metro Housing (2000). <http://www.cityofdurban.co.za>

Egan, G. (1994). **The skilled helper.** Pacific Grove, Ca: Brooks/Cole.

Elliot, (1993). Social work and social development: Towards an integrative model for social work practice. **International Social Work**, 36(1), 21-36.

Estes, R.J. (1993). Towards sustainable development: From theory to praxis. **Social Development Issues**, 15(3), 1-29.

Evans, R. (1994). Settlement Index. In D. Hindson and J. McCarthy. (Eds.). **Here to stay: Informal settlements in KwaZulu-Natal**. Durban: Indicator Press.

Ferrinho, H. (1981). **Towards a theory of community development**. Cape Town: Juta.

Fischer, J. (1973). Is casework effective? **Social Work**, 18, 5-20.

Franklin, C. (1995). Expanding the vision of social constructionist debates: Creating relevance for practitioners. **Families in Society: The Journal of Contemporary Human Services**, 395-406.

Franklin, D.L. (1990). The cycles of social work practice: Social Action vs individual interest. **Journal of Progressive Human Services**, 1(2), 59-80.

Fraser, M., Taylor, M.J., Jackson, R. and O'Jack, J. (1991). Social work and science: Many ways of knowing? **Social Work Research and Abstracts**, 27(4), 5-15.

Freire, P. (1972). **Pedagogy of the oppressed**. Middlesex, England: Penguin Books.

Gama, J. (1990). The impact of stress in our community with special reference to children and youth. In, Centre for Intergroup Studies. **The influence of violence on children**. Occasional Paper No. 13. Cape Town: University of Cape Town.

Gergen, K.J. (1985). The social constructionist movement in modern psychology. **American Psychologist**, 40(3), 266-275.

Gergen, K. (1994). **Towards transformation in social knowledge**. (Second

edition). London: Sage Publications.

Gergen, K. (1998). Constructionist dialogues and the vicissitudes of the political. In Velody, I. and Williams, R. (Eds.). **The politics of constructionism**. London: Sage Publications

Gergen, K. (1999). **An invitation to social constructionism**. London: Sage Publications.

Gergen, K.J. and Semin, G.R. (1990). Everyday understanding in science and daily life. In G.R. Semin and K.J. Gergen (Eds.). **Everyday understanding: Social and scientific implications**. London: Sage.

Germaine, C. and Gitterman, A. (1980). **The life model**. New York: Columbia University Press.

Gilchrist, V.J. (1992). Key informant interviews. In B.F. Crabtree and W. L. Miller. (Eds.). **Doing qualitative research**. Newbury Park, Ca: Sage Publications.

Gilgun, J.F. (1994). A case for case studies in social work research. **Social Work**, 39(4), 371-380.

Goldstein, H. (1991). Qualitative research and social work practice: Partners in discovery. **Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare**, 18(4), 101-119.

Goldstein, H. (1993). Field education for reflective practice: A re-constructive proposal. **Journal of Teaching in Social Work**, 8(1/2), 165-182.

Goldstein, H. (1998). What is social work, really? Editorial notes. **Families in Society**, 343-345.

Graaff, J. (1996). Changing ideas in Marxist thought in Southern Africa. In J,K Coetzee and J. Graaff. (Eds.). **Reconstruction, development and people.** Johannesburg;International Thomson Publishing (SA) (Pty) Ltd.

Grant, L. and Meiklejohn, C. (1994). Health and recreation. In D. Hindson and J. McCarthy. (Eds.). **Here to stay: Informal settlements In KwaZulu-Natal.** Durban: Indicator Press.

Gray, M. (1989). Community development: Has social work met the challenge? **Social Work/Maatskaplike Werk**, 25(1), 44-47.

Gray, M. (1994). **The relationship between social work, ethics and politics.** Unpublished doctoral thesis. University of Natal, Durban.

Gray, M. (1996). The role of social workers in developmental welfare: Is there a place for them? **Social Work Practice**, 2, 8-13.

Gray, M. (1998). Welfare policy for reconstruction and development in South Africa. **International Social Work**, 41(1), 23-37.

Gray, M. (2000). Social work and the new social service professions in South Africa. **Social Work/Maarskaplike Werk**, 36(1), 99-109.

Gray, M.M.A. and Bernstein, A.J. (1994). Integrated practice: A misnomer in social work. **Social Work/Maatskaplike Werk**, 30(3), 199-207.

Gray, M. and Sewpaul, V. (1998). Critique of the policy proposals of the inter-ministerial committee on young people. **Social Work/Maatskaplike Werk**, 34(1), 12-27.

Gray, M. and Simpson, B. (1997). Developmental social work education: A field example. **International Social Work**, 41, 227-237.

Greenwood, D.J. and Levin, M. (1998). **Introduction to action research**. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Grief, G.L. and Lynch, A.A. (1983). The eco-systems perspective. In C.Meyer. (Ed.). **Clinical social work in the eco-systems perspective**. New York: Columbia University Press.

Grinnell, Jr., R.M. and Stothers, M. (1988). Utilising research designs. In R.M. Grinnell, Jr. (Ed.). **Social work research and evaluation**. Itasca, Illinois: F.E. Peacock Publishers.

Gochros, H.L. (1988). Research interviewing. In R.M. Grinnell, Jr. (Ed.). **Social work research and evaluation**. Itasca, Illinois: F.E. Peacock Publishers.

Guba, E. (1990). The alternative paradigm dialog. In E.G. Guba. **The paradigm dialog**. Sage publications: Newbury Park, Ca.

Guba, E.G. and Lincoln, Y.S. (1981). **Improving the usefulness of evaluation through responsive and naturalistic approaches**. San Francisco: Jossey Bass.

Guba, E.G. and Lincoln, Y.S. (1994). Competing paradigms in qualitative research. In Denzin, N.K. and Lincoln, Y.S. **Handbook of qualitative research**. Sage Publications: Thousand Oaks.

Hadebe, J. (2000). **Attitudes of community leaders in Bhambayi towards child sexual abuse**. Unpublished Honours dissertation. Durban: University of Natal.

Harber, M.C.(1998). **Social policy implications for the care and welfare of children affected by HIV/AIDS in Kwazulu- Natal**. Unpublished master's dissertation. Durban: University of Natal.

Hartman, A. (1990). Many ways of knowing. In A. Hartman. (Ed.). **Reflections and controversies: Essays on social work**. Washington, D.C.: NASW Press.

Haynes, K. (1998). The one hundred- year debate: Social reform versus individual treatment. **Social Work**, 43(6), 501- 509

Heineman Pieper, M. (1985). The future of social work research. **Social Work Research and Abstracts**, 21(4),3-11

Hindson, D. and McCarthy, J. (1994). Defining and gauging the problem. In D. Hindson and J. McCarthy. (Eds.). **Here to stay: Informal settlements in kwaZulu- Natal**. Durban: Indicator Press.

Hindson, D and Morris, M. (1994). **Violence in Natal KwaZulu: Dynamics, causes and trends**. Working document for input into Synthesis Report on Informal Settlements in Natal KwaZulu.

Hollister, D. (1977). Social work skills for social development. **Social Development Issues**, 1(1), 2-10.

Howe, D. (1993). **On becoming a client**. London: Sage Publications.

Howe, D. (1994). Modernity, postmodernity and social work. **British Journal of Social Work**, 24, 513- 532.

Howe, G. (1984). Squatters in the Mother city: Urbanised illegals and the myth of

mass influx. **Indicator**, 2(2), 4-7.

Hudson, W.W. (1978). First axioms of treatment. **Social Work**, 23, 65-66.

Hughes, H. (1987). Violence in Inanda, August, 1985. **Journal of Southern African Studies**, 13(3), 331-354.

IMC. (1996). **Discussion document of the inter-ministerial committee for young people at risk**. Pretoria: Department of Welfare.

International Federation of Social Workers. Press release, 29.6.2001. E-mail communication.

Irvine, D. (1990). The consequences for national negotiations. In **Violence in Natal: Counting the cost**. Durban, IDASSA.

Kabadaki, K. (1995). Exploration of social work practice for rural development in Uganda. **Journal of Social Development in Africa**, 10(1), 77-88.

Kadushin, A. (1992). Social work supervision. **The Clinical Supervisor**, 10(2), 9-27.

Karger, H.J. (1983). Science, research and social work: Who controls the profession? **Social Work**, 28, 200-205.

Kiepiel, J. (1994). Settlement types and reconstruction. In D. Hindson and J. McCarthy. (Eds.). **Here to stay: Informal settlements in KwaZulu-Natal**. Durban: Indicator Press.

Klaasen, E. (1990). The impact of violence on children. In, Centre for Intergroup Studies. **The Influence of violence on children**. Occasional Paper No. 13.

Cape Town: University of Cape Town.

Krueger, R.A. (1988). **Focus groups: A practical guide for applied research**. Newbury Park: Sage Publications.

Kuzel, A.J. (1992). Sampling in qualitative inquiry. In B.F. Crabtree and W.L. Miller (Eds.). **Doing qualitative research**. Newbury Park, Ca: Sage Publications.

Kvale, S. (1996). **An Introduction to qualitative research Interviewing**. Thousand Oak, Ca; Sage Publications.

Kvalsig, J. (Undated). **The everyday life of children in two informal settlements**. Unpublished paper prepared for Training Resources in Early Education (TREE) by the Child Development Programme, HSRC, KwaZulu Natal.

Lederc-Madlala, S. (1999). **Demonizing women in the era of AIDS: An analysis of the gendered construction of HIV/AIDS in KwaZulu- Natal**. Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation. Durban: University of Natal.

Ledderborge, U.F. (1996). **Transracial placements of children in the Durban metropolitan area**. Unpublished Masters' dissertation. Durban: University of Natal.

Letsebe, M.A. (1995). Social workers in politically volatile areas in South Africa: lessons for social work education and training. **Social Work/Maatskaplike Werk**, 31(2), 97-108.

Lewis, J.A., Lewis, M.D., Daniels, J.A. and D'Andrea, M.J. (1998). **Community Counselling: Empowerment strategies for a diverse society**. Pacific Grove,

Ca: Brooks/Cole.

Le Roux, A. (1998). The challenge of community participation. In C. Barberton, M. Blake and H. Kotze. (Eds.) **Creating action space**. Claremont: IDASA and David Philips Publishers.

Lincoln, Y. and Guba, E. (1985). **Naturalistic inquiry**. Beverly Hills, Ca: Sage.

Lishman, J. (1998). Personal and professional development. In R.Adams, L. Dominelli, and M.Payne. **Social work: Themes, issues and critical debates**. Houndsmills: Macmillan.

Loening, W. (1992). Adolescent pregnancy: a medical perspective on the consequences for mother and child. In S. Burman and E. Preston-Whyte (Eds.). **Questionable issue: Illegitimacy in South Africa**. Cape Town: Oxford University Press.

Loffel, J. (2000). Truth and the social services. **Social work/Maatskalike Werk**, 36(1), 53-68.

Lombard, A. (1991). Community work and community development as a process. In A. Lombard in collaboration with M.L. Weyers and J.H. Schoeman. **Community work and community development: Perspectives on social development**. Pretoria: Haum Tertiary.

Lombard, A. (1999). Transforming social work education in South Africa: A contextual and empowerment issue. **Social Work/Maatskaplike Werk**, 35(2), 97-112.

Louw, L.R. (1991). Apartheid, poverty, social transformation: A pilgrimage to a non racial democracy challenges social work in South Africa. **Social**

Work/Maatskaplike Werk,27(1), 22-27.

Mabin, A. (1992). Dispossession, exploitation and struggle: an historical overview of South Africa urbanization. In D.M. Smith (Ed.). **The apartheid city and beyond**. Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press.

Makhathini, M. (1994). The case of Cato Manor. In D. Hindson and J. McCarthy. (Eds.). **Here to stay: Informal settlements in kwaZulu- Natal**. Durban: Indicator Press.

Malepa, M. (1990). The effects of violence on the development of young children in Soweto. In, Centre for Intergroup Studies. **The influence of violence on children**. Occasional Paper No. 13. Cape Town: University of Cape Town.

Marais, L and Krige, S. (1997). The upgrading of Freedom Square informal settlement in Bloemfontein: Lessons for future Low-income housing. **Urban Forum**, 8(2), 177-193.

Margolin, L. (1997). **Under cover of kindness: The invention of social work**. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia.

Mark, R. (1996). **Research made simple: A handbook for social workers**. Thousand Oaks, Ca: Sage Publications.

Marlow, C. (1998). **Research methods for generalist social workers**. Pacific grove; Brooks/Cole.

Martinez-Brawley, E.E. and Zorita, P.M-B. (1998).At the edge of the frame: Beyond science and art in social work. **British Journal of Social Work**, 28,197-212.

Masinga, H.L. (1994). **Local government approaches to land invasions: A case study of the Durban City Council.** Unpublished Masters Dissertation in Town and Regional Planning. Durban: University of Natal.

Mathebela, P.S. (1999). **Incremental housing and the role of community participation: A comparative study of Cato Manor and Bhambayi.** Unpublished master's dissertation. Durban: University of Natal.

May, J., May, C.A., Newton, T., Persad, R. and Stavrou, A. (1994). Electricity and water provision. In D. Hindson and J. McCarthy. **Here to stay: Informal settlements In KwaZulu-Natal.** Durban: Indicator Press.

Mayoux, L.C. (1991). The poverty of income generation: A critique of women's handicraft schemes in India. In T. Wallace and C. Marsh. (Eds.). **Changing perceptions: Writings on gender and development.** Oxford: Oxfam.

Mazibuko, F. (1998). Transformation or organised fragmentation? Exploring the way forward with social worker formations. **Social Work/Maatskaplike Werk**, 34(1), 28-34.

McKendrick, B.W. (1987). The South African social welfare system. In B.W. McKendrick. (Ed.). **Introduction to social work in South Africa.** Pinetown: Owen Burgess Publishers.

McKendrick, B. W (1990). The future of social work in South Africa. **Social Work/Maatskaplike Werk**, 26(1), 10-18.

McKendrick, B. W. (1991). Social work and mass poverty. Editorial. **Social Work/Maatskaplike werk**, 27(2), 94-95.

McKendrick, B. W. (1994). The transition to practice: How employable are new

graduates. **Social Work/Maatskaplike Werk**, 30(4), 310-318.

McKendrick, B.W. (2001). The promise of social work: Directions for the the future. **Social Work/Maatskaplike Werk**, 37(2), 105-112.

McKendrick, B.W. and Shingwenyana, B.Z. (1995). Are old age pensions for urban Africans family allowances? Implications for the reconstruction and development programme. **Social Work/Maatskaplike Werk**, 31(3), 228-235.

McKendrick, B.W. and Senoamadi, W. (1993). Some effects of violence on squatter camp families and their children. **Social Work/Maatskaplike Werk**, 29(1), 213-222.

Meyer, C. (1983). The search for coherence. In C. Meyer (Ed.). **Clinical social work in the eco-systems perspective**. New York: Columbia University Press.

Midgely, J. (1993). Ideological roots of social development strategies. **Social Development Issues**, 15(1), 1-13.

Midgely, J. (1995). **Social development: The developmental perspective in social welfare**. London: Sage Publications.

Midgley, J. (1996). Involving social workers in economic development. **International Social Work**, 39, 13-25.

Miley, K., O' Melia, M. and du Bois, B. (1995). **Generalist social work practice: An empowering approach**. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Mills, C.W. (1959). **The sociological imagination**. New York, Oxford University Press.

Minnaar, A de V. (1992). **Squatters, violence and the future of informal settlements in the Greater Durban region.** Pretoria: Human Sciences Research Council.

Mitchell, M. and Bevan, A. (1992). **Culture, cash and housing: Community and tradition in low income building.** London: Intermediate Technology Publications.

Mlambo, S. (2000). **Income generating projects and the poverty of women: The case of Chinamora.** Unpublished Master's dissertation. Durban: University of Natal.

Morell, C. (1987). Cause is function: Towards a feminist model of integration for social work. **Social Service Review**,145-155.

Morgan, D.L. (1998). **The focus group guide book.** Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Munslow, B. and Fitzgerald, P. (1997). Search for a development strategy: The RDP and beyond. In P.Fitzgerald, A. McLennan and B. Munslow (Eds.). **Managing sustainable development in South Africa.** Cape Town: Oxford University Press.

Naidoo, B. (1999). **A holistic approach to housing: A social work approach.** Unpublished master's dissertation. Durban: University of Natal.

Napier, M. (1997). **The incremental growth of housing: A post occupancy investigation of core housing in Khayelitsha and Inanda.** Pretoria: Division of Building technology, CSIR.

Ndwanga, V.M. (1994). Constraints on women's income generating projects. In

R. Besha. (Ed.). **African women: Our burdens and struggles**. Johannesburg: Institute for African Alternatives.

Omer, S. (1979). Social development. **International Social Work**, 22(3), 11-26.

Osei-Hwedie, K. (1993). The challenge of social work in Africa: Starting the indigenisation process. **Journal of Social Development in Africa**, 8(1), 19-30.

Osei-Hwedie, K. (1996). The indigenisation of social work practice and education in Africa: the dilemma of theory and method. **Social Work/Maatskaplike Werk**, 32(3), 215-225.

Paiva, J.F.X. (1977). A conception of social development. **Social Service Review**, 51(2), 327-336.

Papell, C.P. and Rothman, B. (1966). Social group work models: Possession and heritage. **Journal of Education for Social Work**, 66-77.

Papell, C.P. and Skolnik, L. (1992). The reflective practitioner: A contemporary paradigm's relevance for social work education. **Journal of Social Work Education**, 28(1), 18-26.

Pardeck, J.T., Murphy, J.W. and Min Choi, J. (1994). Some implications of postmodernism for social work practice. **Social Work**, 39(4), 343-346.

Patel, L. (1992). **Restructuring social welfare: Options for South Africa**. Braamfontein: Ravan Press.

Patton, M.Q. (1980). **Qualitative evaluation methods**. Beverley Hills, Ca: Sage Publications.

Payne, M. (1991). **Modern social work theory**. Houndsmills: MacMillan Education Ltd.

Payne, M. (1996). **What is professional social work?** Birmingham, Venture Press.

Payne, M. (1998). Why social work? Comparative perspectives on social issue and response formation. **International Social Work**, 41, 443-453.

Payne, M. (1999). Social construction in social work and social action. In A. Jokinen, K. Juhila and T. Poso (Eds.). **Constructing social work practices**. Aldershot: Ashgate.

Petersen, I. (1993) and Ramsay, S.. Mental health and development in a shack settlement: the case of Bhambayi. **Psychology in Society**, 17, 35-50.

Potgieter, M.C. (1998). **The social work process. Development to empower people**. Prentice Hall South Africa (Pty)Ltd.

Preston- Whyte, E. (1993). Women who are not married: Fertility, 'illegitimacy, and the nature of households and domestic groups among single African women in Durban. **South African Journal of Sociology**, 24(3), 63-71.

Preston-Whyte, E. and Zondi, M. (1992). African teenage pregnancy: whose problem? In S. Burman and E. Preston-Whyte. (Eds.). **Questionable Issue: Illegitimacy in South Africa**. Cape Town: Oxford University Press.

Pillay, U. (1994). International perspectives on informal settlements. In D.Hindson and J. McCarthy. (Eds.). **Here to stay: Informal settlements in Kwazulu- Natal**. Durban: Indicator Press.

Pringle, M. (1975). **The needs of children**. London: Hutchinson Educational.

QSR NUD*IST Workshop Handbook, 1997.

Rahman, A. (1993). **People's self development: Perspectives on participatory action research**. Dhaka, Bangladesh: University Press Ltd.

Raheim, S. (1996). Micro-enterprise as an approach for promoting economic development in social work: Lessons from the self-employment investment demonstration. **International Social Work**, 39, 69-82.

Ramasar, P. (1992). Community work in the squatter area of Inanda, Natal (first phase). **Social Work Practice**, 1, 9-11.

Ramphal, R. and Moonilal, R. (1993). Can social work agencies meet the challenges in a post-apartheid South Africa? A planner's perspective. **Social Work/Maatskaplike Werk**, 29(4), 363-370.

Raniga, T. (2000). **An evaluation of community participation in attempts to start a community garden project in the Shakashead community**. Unpublished master's dissertation. Durban: University of Natal.

Ransom, B., Poswa, T. and van Rooyen, C. (1997). Youth unemployment – a study in an informal settlement in KwaZulu Natal. **Social Work/Maatskaplike Werk**, 33(2), 165-177.

Rappaport, J. (1985). The power of empowerment language. **Social Policy**, 16(2), 15-21.

Reid, K. (1981). **From character building to social treatment. The history of the use of groups in social work**. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press.

Richards, R. (1995). **Living on Durban's fringe: A study of leisure styles of shack and peri-urban youth.** Unpublished Master's dissertation. Durban: University of Natal.

Rodwell, M.K. (1998). **Social work constructivist research.** New York: Garland Publishing.

Rojek, C., Peacock, G. and Collins, S. (1988). **Social work and received ideas.** London: Routledge.

Roodt, M.J. (1996). Participatory development: A jargon concept. In J.K. Coetzee and J. Graaf. (Eds.). **Reconstruction, development and people.** Johannesburg: International Thomson Publishing (South Africa) (Pty) Ltd.

Rosenfeld, J.M. (1983). The domain and expertise of social work: a conceptualisation. **Social Work**, 28(3), 186-191.

Ross, E. (1996). How South African social workers cope with occupational stress. **Social Work/Maatskaplike Werk**, 32(2), 97-111.

Ross, E. and Fridjhon, P. (1995). Burnout: A smouldering problem among South African social workers. **Social Work/Maatskaplike Werk**, 31(3), 265-279.

Rothman, J. (1974). **Planning and organisation for social change.** New York: Columbia University Press.

Rothmund, G.H. and Kela, E.N. (1992). Community work in a squatter community. **Social Work Practice**, 1, 6-8.

Rwomire, A. and Raditlhokwa, L. (1996). Social work in Africa: Issues and

challenges. **Journal of Social Development in Africa**, 11(2), 5-19.

Rubin, A. (1988). Survey Research. In RM Grinnel, jr. **Social work research and evaluation**. Itasca, Ill: Peacock Publishers.

Ruckdeschel, R.A. (1985). Qualitative research as a perspective. **Social Research and Abstracts**, 21(2), 17-21.

Saleebey, D. (1992). **The strengths perspective in social work**. New york: Longman.

Sarantakos, S. (1993). **Social research**. McMillan Education Australia.

Schon, D.A. (1983). **The reflective practitioner: How professionals think in action**. London: Temple Smith.

Scott, M.J. and Stradling, S.G (1994). **Counselling for post-traumatic stress disorder**. London: Sage Publications.

Sewpaul, V. (1992). Primary care; The challenge to social work educators. **Social Work/Maatskaplike Werk**, 28(3), 20-28.

Sewpaul V. (1997). The RDP: Implications for social work practice and social welfare policy development in South Africa. **Social Work/Maatskaplike Werk**, 33(1), 1-10.

Sewpaul, V. (2001). Economic globalisation and social policy reform: Social work curricula in the South African context. **Social Work/Maatskaplike Werk**, 37(4), 309-324.

Sewpaul, V. (2001a). Models of intervention for children in difficult

circumstances in South Africa. **Child Welfare**, LXXX (5), 571-584.

Sewpaul, V. and Rollins, N. (1999). Operationalising developmental social work: The implementation of an HIV/AIDS project. **Social Work/Maatskaplike Werk**, 35(3), 250-263.

Sheldon, B. (1978). Theory and practice in social work: A re-examination of a tenuous relationship. **British Journal of Social Work**, 8(1), 1-24.

Sheppard, M. (1998). Practice validity, reflexivity and knowledge for social work, **British Journal of Social Work**, 28, 763-781.

Sherman, E. (1991). Interpretive methods for social work practice and research. **Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare**, 18(4), 69-81

Silawwe, G.W. (1995). The need for a new social work perspective in an African setting: The case of social casework in Zambia. **British Journal of Social Work**, 25, 71-84.

Silverman, D. (2000). **Doing qualitative research: A practical handbook**. London: Sage Publications.

Simkin, C. (1986). Household composition and structure in South Africa. In S. Burman and P. Reynolds. (Eds.). **Growing up in a divided society**. Evanston, Ill: Northwestern University Press.

Simpson, B. (1997). Notes from practice. Protecting children in abusive situations: A case study. **Social Work/Maatskaplike Werk**, 33(2), 178-183.

Simpson, B. (2000). A social constructionist approach to social work education in South Africa: Some practical considerations. **Social Work/Maatskaplike**

Werk, 36(1), 35-43.

Siporin, M. (1980). Ecological systems theory in social work. **Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare, 7**, 507-532.

South Africa Yearbook (1999 and 2000). Pretoria: Government Communication and Information System.

Specht, H. and Courtney, M.E. (1994). **Unfaithful angels: How social work has abandoned its mission.** New York: Free Press.

Staller, K. M. and Kirk, S.A. (1998). Knowledge utilisation in social work and legal practice. **Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare, 25(3)**, 91-113.

Steward, G. and Steward, J. (1993). **Social work and housing.** Basingstoke, Hands: Macmillan.

Steyn, A.F. (1993). **Gesinstrukture in die RSA.** Pretoria: Human Sciences Research Council.

TerreBlanche, M. and Durrheim, K. (1999). Social constructionist methods. In M. TerreBlanche and K. Durrheim. (Eds.). **Research in practice: Applied methods for the social sciences.** Cape Town: Cape Town University Press.

Thackeray, M. G., Farley, O.W. and Skidmore, R.A. (1994). **Introduction to Social Work.** (Sixth Edition). Engelwood clifs, N.J: Prentice- Hall.

Thomas, E.J. (1977). The BESDAS model for effective practice. **Social Work Research and Abstracts, 13(2)**, 12-16.

Thyer, B.A. (1989). First principles of practice research. **British Journal of**

Social Work, 19, 309-323.

Toms, I.P. (1992). Community participation in squatter communities. **Social Work Practice**, 1, 14-16.

Toseland, R.W. and Rivas, R.F. (1984). **An Introduction to group work practice**. New York: MacMillan.

Transvaal Provincial Administration, Germiston Regional Office. (1992). Rietfontein: A community development project. **Social Work Practice**, 1, 11-14.

Triegaardt, J.D. (1996). The reconstruction and development programme; A beginning discussion and analysis for social work policy. **Social Work/Maatskaplike Werk**, 332(2), 142-147.

Turner, J.F.C. (1976). **Housing by people: Towards autonomy in building environments**. London: Boyars.

Tyson, K. (1992). A new approach to relevant scientific research for practitioners: The heuristic paradigm. **Social Work**, 37(6), 481-576.

Van der Linden. J. (1986). **The sites and services approach reviewed: Solution or stop gap to Third World housing shortages**. Alershot: Gower.

Van Schalkwyk, H.M. (1997). **A participatory partnership model for social work in informal settlements**. Unpublished Ph.D. thesis. Johannesburg: Rand Afrikaans University.

Van Vuuren, A. (1997). **The structure and support networks of family in informal settlements in Durban**. Unpublished Ph.D. thesis. Johannesburg: Rand Afrikaans University.

Wakefield, J. (1996). Does social work need the eco-systems perspective? Part 2. Does the perspective save social work from incoherence? **Social Service Review**, 70(2), 183-213.

Wegenast, D. and Bookhagen, A. (1996) Staff development and training: Improving agency performance. **Participating in change: proceedings of the Joint World Congress of the International Federation of Social Workers and the International Association of Schools of Social Work (Vol 2)**, Hong Kong.

Weick, A. (1991). The place of science in social work. **Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare**, 18(4), 13-34.

Weick, A. (1993). Reconstructing social work education. **Journal of Teaching in Social Work**, 8(1/2), 11-30.

Weinbach, R.W. (1998). **The social work manager: A practical guide to success**. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Welsh, G. (1987). An integrated approach to social work practice. In B.W. McKendrick. (Ed.). **Introduction to social work in South Africa**. Pinetown: Owen Burgess Publishers.

Weyers, M.L. (1997). **New light on community work and community development**. Potchefstroom: University of Potchefstroom.

Wilkins, N. and Hofmeyer, J. (1994). Socio-economic aspects of informal settlements. In Hindson, D. and McCarthy, J. (Eds.). **Here to stay: Informal settlements in KwaZulu- Natal**. Durban: Indicator Press.

Wilson, F. and Rampele, M. (1989). **Uprooting poverty: The South African**

challenge. Cape Town: David Philip.

Witkin, S. (1991). The implications of social constructionism for social work education. **Journal of Teaching in Social Work**, 4(2), 37-48.

Wittenberg, M. and Pearce, C. (1996). Youth and unemployment: Some perspectives from the South African living standards and development survey. In **Out of School**. Johannesburg, Education Policy Unit, University of Witwatersrand.

Wohl, B.J. (1988). Roots and new frontiers. In M.Lionderman, M.L. Birbaum and B.Dazzo. (Eds.). **Roots and new frontiers in social group work: Selected proceedings of the 7th annual symposium on the advancement of social work with groups**. New York: The Haworth Press.

Zulu, P. (1991). Legitimizing the culture of survival. In E. Preston-Whyte and C. Rogerson (Eds.). **South Africa's informal economy**. Cape Town: Oxford University Press.

Zulu, P and Stavrou, S. (1990). Violence in Natal: Social implications. In **Violence in Natal: Counting the cost**. Durban: IDASSA.

NEWSPAPER ARTICLES

Daily News	2 November 1998
	20 June 2000
	8 July 2001
	24 October 2001
Electronic Mail and Guardian	18 May 1997

Mail and Guardian	13 October 1997
	1 February 2000
	2 November 2001
Natal Mercury	10 February 2000
	24 October 2001
Natal on Saturday	10 September 1994
Sunday Times	10 February 1999
	23 May 1999
Sunday Tribune	26 October 1997
	24 January 1999